

*AN ATLAS-HISTORY OF THE
SECOND GREAT WAR*

VOL. I SEPT. 1939 TO JAN. 1940
VOL II JAN. 1940 TO JULY 1940
VOL III JULY 1940 TO JAN. 1941
VOL IV JAN. 1941 TO JULY 1941
VOL V JULY 1941 TO JAN 1942
VOL. VI JAN. 1942 TO JULY 1942
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AN ATLAS - HISTORY OF
THE SECOND GREAT WAR

by
J. F. HORRABIN

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

THE foreword to the preceding volume of this history, written in July 1942, ended on a note of hope. The events of the last two months of the year and of the first weeks of 1943 transformed hopes into achievements. The Red Army's great counter-offensive, the defeat of Rommel in Egypt and the Eighth Army's seizure of Tripolitania, and the Anglo-American landings in North Africa—"springboard" for future operations against southern Europe—have very materially altered the whole perspective of the war against the Nazis. The need now, in the words of the Prime Minister quoted as motto for this volume, is "to use the stimulus of victory to increase our exertions."

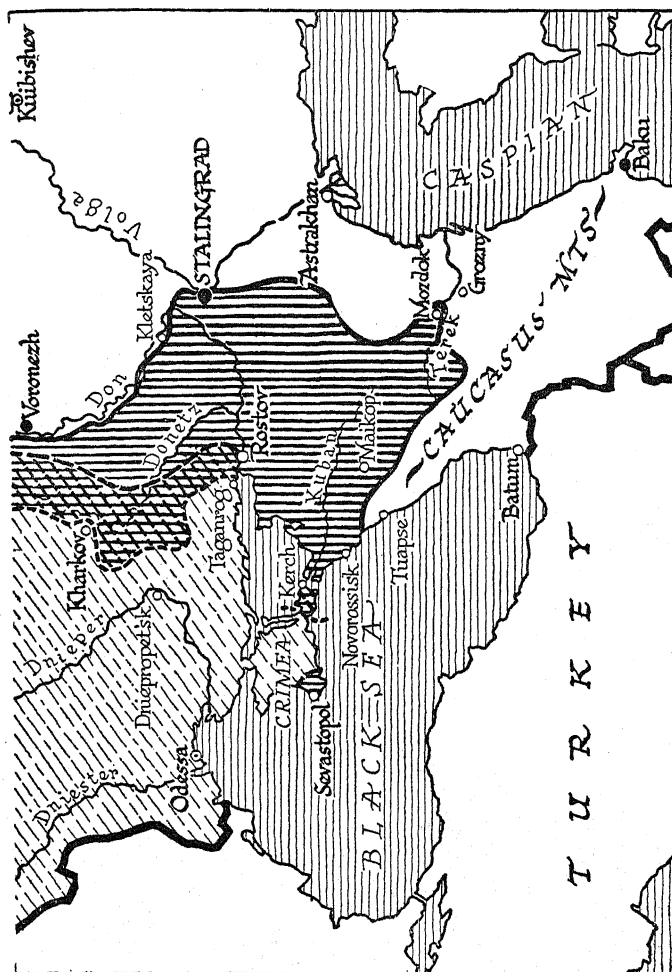
One vital part of the struggle is, necessarily, left unillustrated in this volume: the war against the U-boat. Since the tale of sinkings of Allied shipping and the actual geographical details of U-boat operations cannot be made public, I have thought it best simply to refer the reader to the Index Map at the front of this book; and to urge him, as he considers the vast extent of the ocean-ways which form the United Nations' lines of communication and supply, to realize the paramount importance of the unending struggle at sea.

J. F. H.

February 1, 1943



Offensive in Russia—



Germany's 1942 Offensive in Russia—

THE rush of the original German onslaught on the U.S.S.R. in the summer and autumn of 1941 had enabled the Nazi armies to over-run Russian territory, from the Gulf of Finland down to the Black Sea, to an average depth of 500 miles. Leningrad was ringed round ; Moscow was all but reached ; the Ukraine, as far east as the upper Donetz, was occupied.

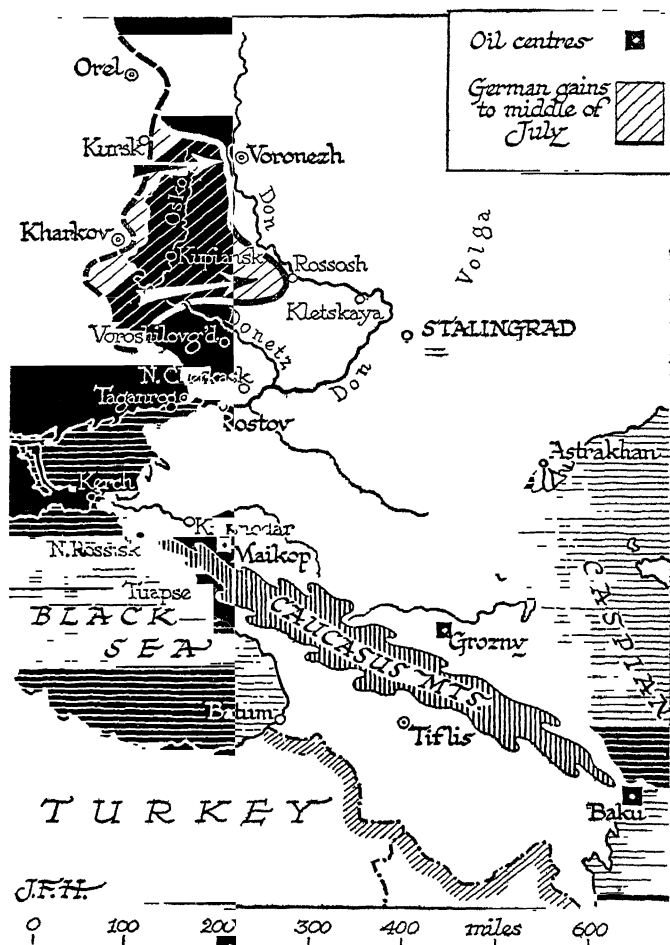
The counter-offensive of the Red Armies in December-January 1941-42, pushed back the invaders a hundred miles or more along the whole line of the front. Leningrad was still surrounded. But the dangerous enemy salients north and south of Moscow had been wiped out, and west and north-west of the capital the Germans were pushed back to their Rzhev-Viasma positions.

After the spring thaws had dried, Timoshenko's armies in the south anticipated the renewal of the German offensive by attacking on a hundred-mile front north and south of Kharkov. They did not gain a great amount of ground ; but they certainly delayed the start of Hitler's 1942 campaign by some weeks. Instead of being launched in May it did not materialize until July.

Nor was it, in this second year of the Russian war, an attack along the whole front. It was confined to the 400-mile long southern sector, from the region of Kursk (300 miles south-west of Moscow) down to Taganrog. It extended a further 400 miles southward (nearly

1,000 additional miles of front) when the capture of Rostov and the forcing of the lower Don enabled the German armies to break into the Caucasus, and strike towards the great oil-fields which were one of the vital bases of Russia's industrial strength.

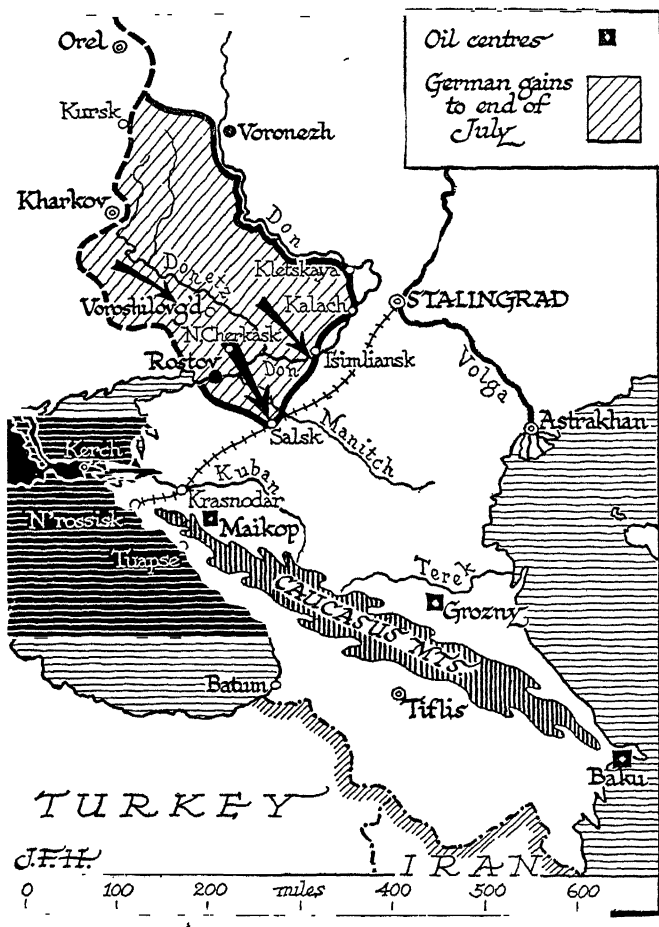
But, as the map makes clear, this 1942 offensive at its very fullest extent covered a much more limited area than the vast Nazi drive of the preceding year. Neither German man-power nor German war production was illimitable.



The German Drive to the Don—

THE delayed German offensive of 1942 began during July with attacks north and south of Kharkov, in the area of the Russian offensive two months previously. From the Kursk region the enemy struck across the river Oskol towards the Don at Voronezh. South of Kharkov they crossed the Donetz and reached the middle Don in the region of Rossosh.

There was long and furious fighting for Voronezh, suggesting that an important part of the German plan was to strike north-east from the Don in that region and break through to the middle Volga. If that was the intention it was completely foiled by the magnificent Russian resistance at Voronezh. All German attempts to cross the Don here were defeated; and Voronezh remained to the end of the year the northern limit of the enemy's offensive.



The Germans turn South—

THE last two weeks of July saw von Bock's eastward drive to the Don fan out south-eastward, striking on either side of the river Donetz towards its junction with the lower Don. Voroshilovgrad and Novo Cherkask were captured and the Don itself reached at Tsimliansk. The Russians had to evacuate Rostov, the recapture of which in the previous December had signalled the opening of their winter counter-offensive. From Tsimliansk down the whole length of the river to Rostov the Germans poured across the Don, advancing rapidly to Salsk, nearly 100 miles to the south, and cutting the Krasnodar-Stalingrad railway.

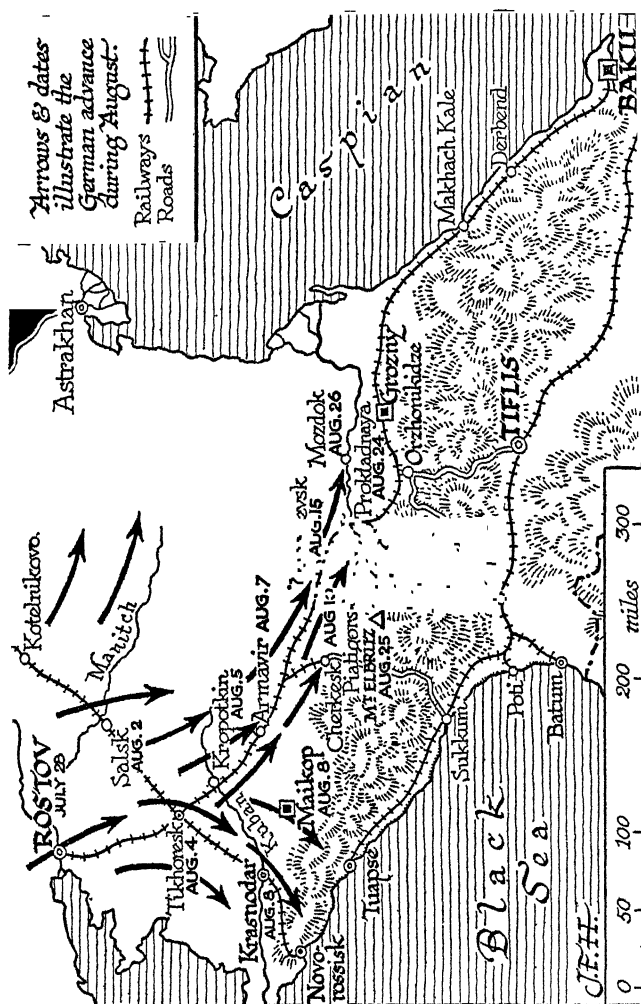
The invasion of the Caucasus had begun.



The Invasion of the Caucasus (I)—

By the middle of August the German wave, advancing east, south-east, and south, had pressed beyond the whole length of the Krasnodar-Stalingrad railway, except for the section just south-west of Stalingrad, and swept down the Kuban valley to the region of the spa towns, Georgievsk and Piatigorsk, on the northern edge of the central Caucasus Mountains. Maikop, the westernmost oil-field, had gone, and the invaders were close to Novorossisk, the chief Russian naval base on the Black Sea (now that Sevastopol had fallen).

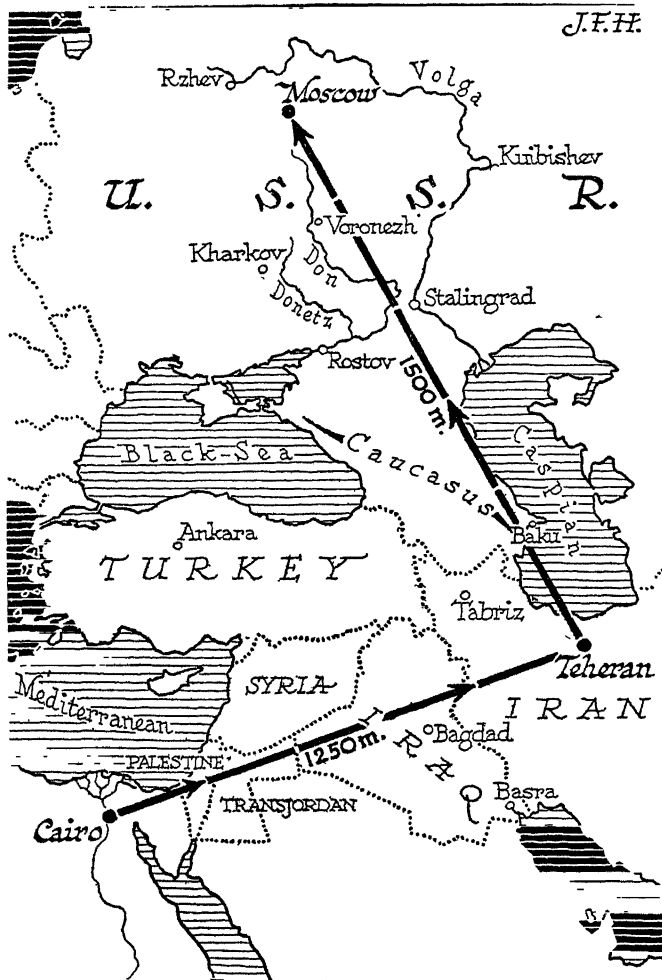
But the Don line held, from Voronezh to Kletskaya. Only near Kalach, in the Don "elbow" opposite Stalingrad, had the Germans forced a way across the river, and there was desperate fighting in the neck of territory between Don and Volga.



The Invasion of the Caucasus (2)—

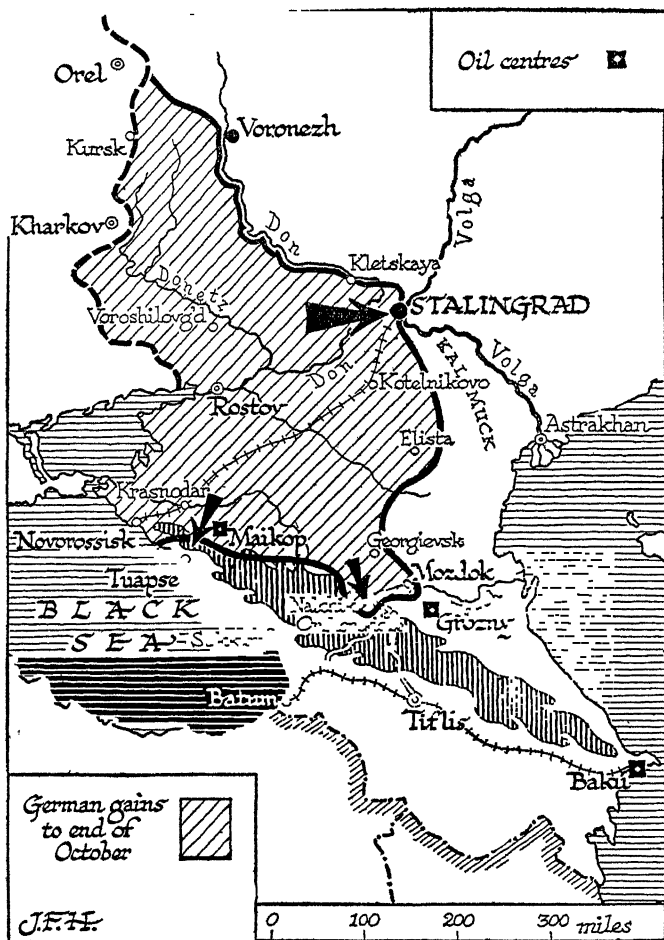
THE map illustrates, with dates, the main stages of the German advance in the northern Caucasus during August. Within a week of reaching Salsk the invaders had occupied Krasnodar and the Maikop oil-field ; and, moving down the Rostov-Baku railway, were close to Georgievsk. Before the end of the month they were fighting on the river Terek, no more than 50 miles from the oil-centre of Grozny, and they were close to the northern outlet of the trans-mountain highways leading to Tiflis and Batum.

But that was very nearly the limit of their advance. In three months of further fighting in the Mozdok-Orzhonikidze region they made scarcely any headway. Grozny oil and the mountain roads stayed just beyond their grasp.



Mr. Churchill flies to Moscow—

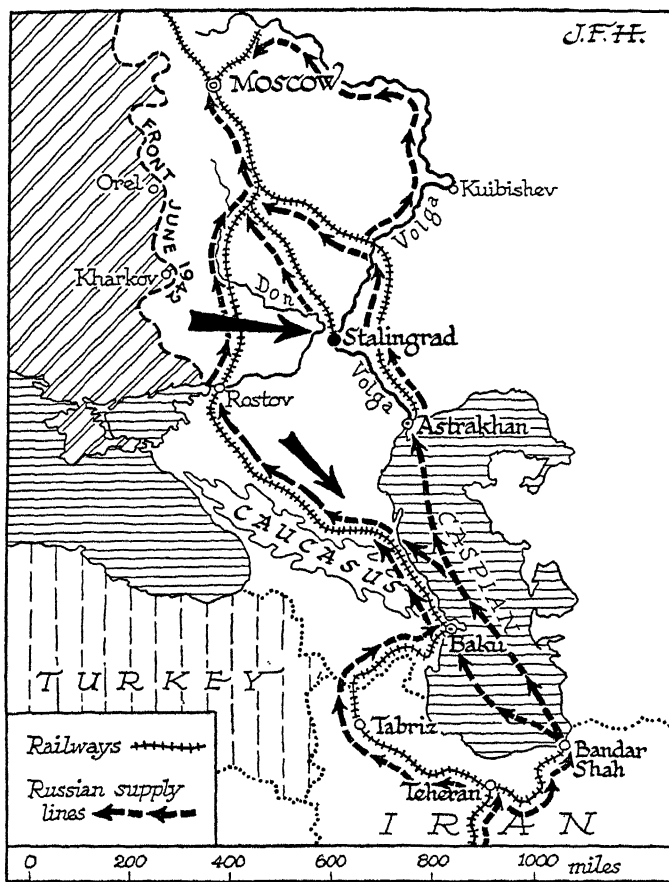
DURING August the British Prime Minister flew to Moscow and spent four days in conference with M. Stalin and M. Molotov in the Kremlin. His journey, as he told the House of Commons in September, was made from Cairo, in two long flights with a break at Teheran. The main subject of discussion in the Kremlin was, of course, the opening of a Second Front in Europe ; and later events made it clear that Mr. Churchill's task had been to convince the Russian leader that the forthcoming Anglo-American move in North Africa was the only immediately practicable plan.



Stalingrad (1)—

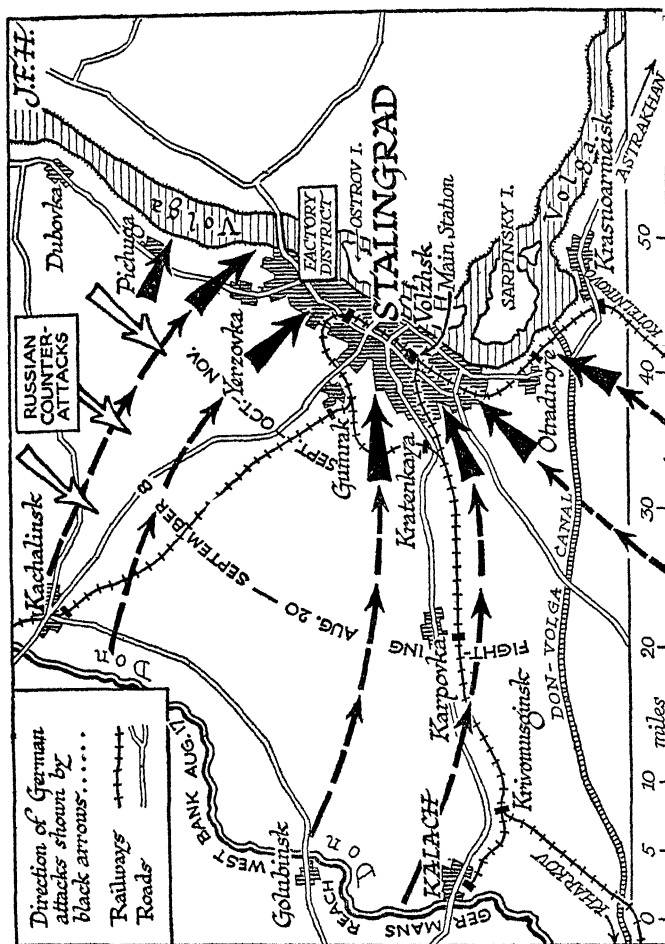
FROM the beginning of September until November the world war seemed to be centred on one town—Stalingrad. Hitler had decreed its fall. But the Red Army willed otherwise. The German advance towards the city, in the area between Don and Volga, had been slow and costly. But at last the invaders forced their way, north and south of the city, to the banks of the Volga itself. Then, building by building, street by street, they blasted their way into Stalingrad. But every inch of its streets—every brick and stone and beam of its factories and houses—was defended by the Russians with superb fury. The Volga was never crossed by the enemy. Stalingrad did not fall.

In the western Caucasus the Germans had occupied Novorossisk, but all their attempts to reach Tuapse broke down. In the centre of the mountain district a local offensive at the end of October resulted in their taking Nalchik.



Stalingrad (2)—

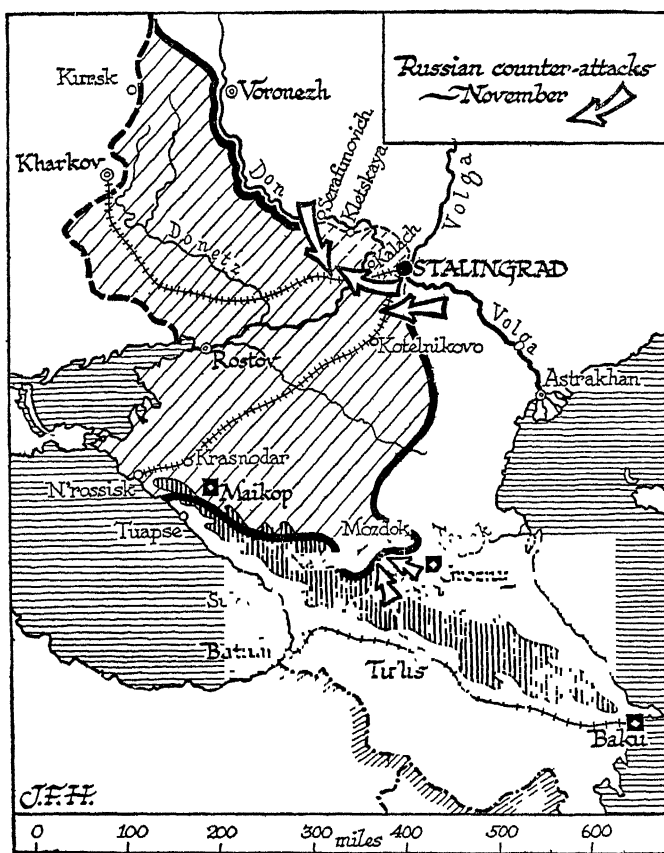
THE vital importance of Stalingrad, if Hitler's 1942 offensive was to show any gain commensurate with his expenditure of men and munitions, lay not so much in the town itself as in its strategic position on the lower Volga. The Germans were fighting for the Volga, the backbone of Russia's line of supply from the south—from the oil-fields of Baku and Grozny, and from the Trans-Iranian rail-head on the Caspian which was Russia's southern link with her allies. A break-through at Stalingrad would have cut this life-line to Moscow and to all northern Russia.



Stalingrad (3)—

IN his speech on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Soviet Union, Stalin quoted a captured German staff-officer who had declared that the Nazi High Command's original plan of campaign fixed the capture of Stalingrad for the end of July. Two days earlier than Stalin (on 8th November), Hitler was explaining to a German audience that he did not need to take any more of the city than he had already captured, and that the conquest of the rest was not worth the bloodshed it would cost. "Enough blood," he declared, "has flowed already."

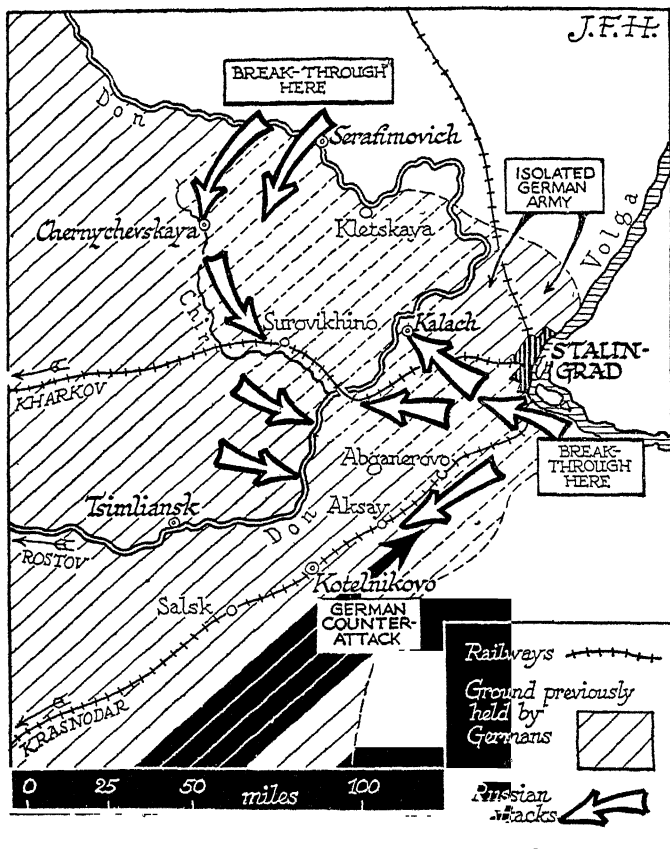
That speech came soon after a continuous twenty-day offensive during October, in which many of the German regiments taking part lost as much as three-quarters of their strength. And it was followed within a few days by another intensive and costly mass attack on the northern suburbs of Stalingrad, which again yielded no decisive result.



The Red Army Counter-attacks (I)—

ON 19th November the Russians struck two surprise blows north-west and south of Stalingrad. The long German flank along the line of the Don from Voronezh southward was attacked at about its centre, in the region of Serafimovich. This thrust was aimed at the railway from Kharkov, the central German line of supply for the forces in front of Stalingrad. From the south of that city another force drove north-westward, cutting the railway nearer to the beleaguered city, at Kalach, just east of the Don. Another part of this southern army struck directly westward at the railway running south from Stalingrad to Krasnodar. Thirty-six thousand prisoners were taken during the first few days of these offensives ; and the Germans investing Stalingrad were left with but a narrow corridor behind them for reinforcements and supplies.

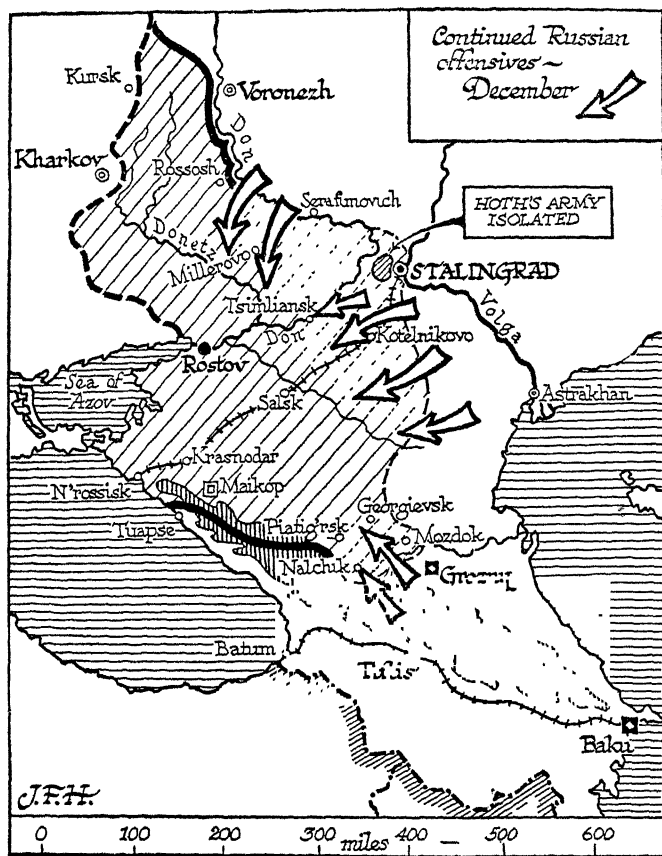
A week or two previously the Russians had begun attacks in the central Caucasus, pushing the enemy back from the approaches to the mountain-pass roads near Nalchik and Orzhonikidze.



The Red Army Counter-attacks (2)—

THIS map shows in more detail the area of the Red Army's counter-offensive in and around the Don "elbow" during the later days of November. The break-through from the north followed the line of the Chir River. The Germans made a determined stand at Surovikhino, but were pushed back eastward against the Don. This left Hoth's army in front of Stalingrad entirely isolated.

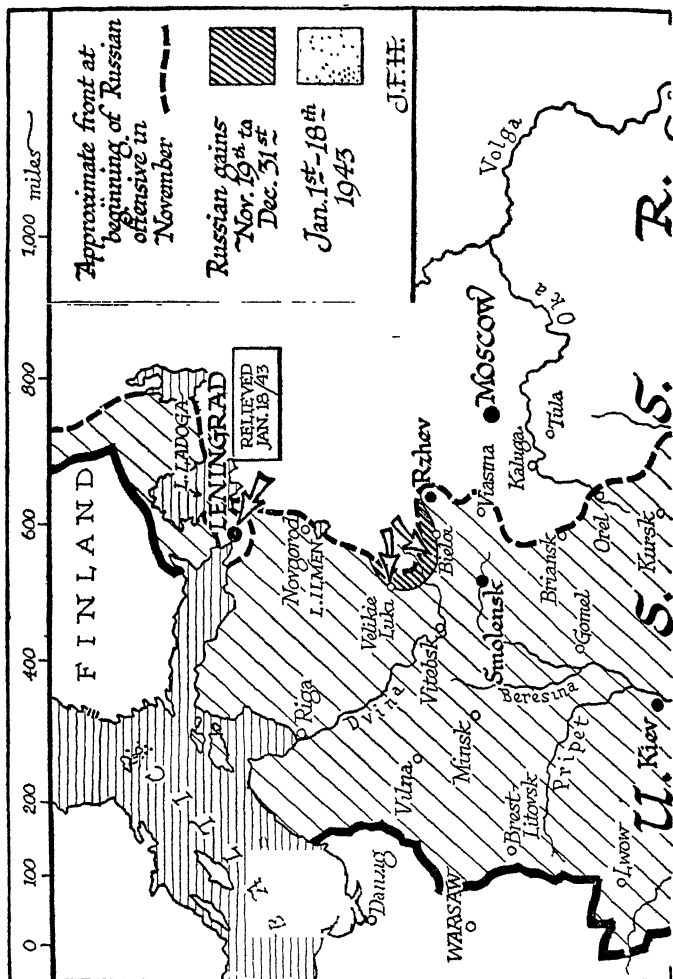
The Germans made a desperate attempt to relieve it by a large-scale attack up the railway line from Kotelnikovo. But the attack was smashed.



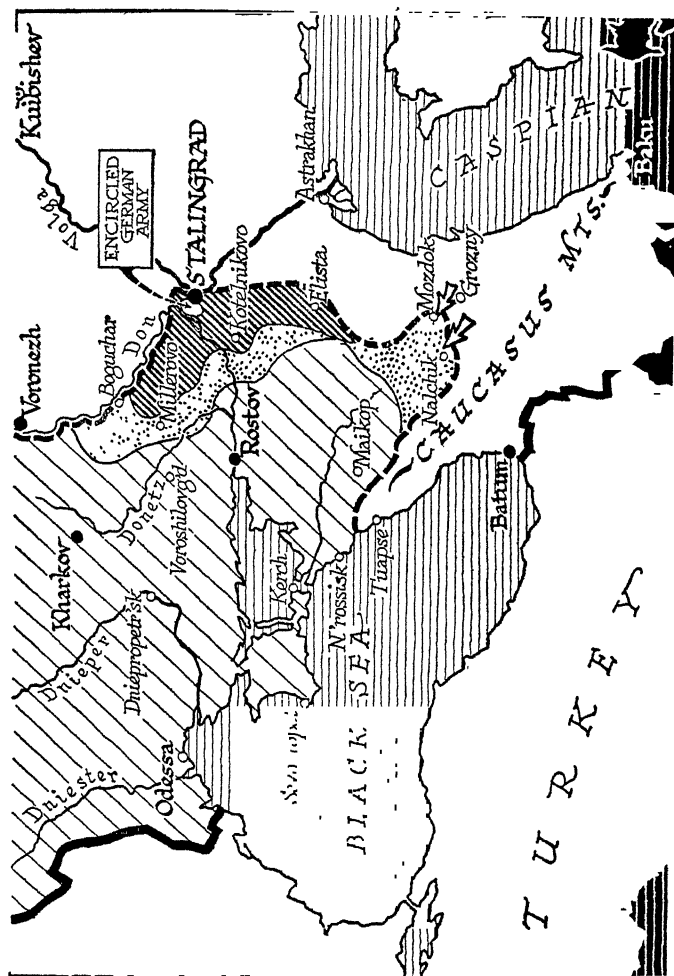
The Red Army Counter-attacks (3)—

DECEMBER saw a widening of the Russian offensives on the Don, and to the south of Stalingrad along the whole eastern German front in the Caucasus. A day or two before Christmas it was announced that a further attack had been launched from the region of Rossosh, higher up the Don, and the enemy pushed back more than 50 miles in the direction of the Donetsk. In the southern area, Kotelnikovo was captured on 29th December. At the end of the year the Red Armies were steadily advancing down the lower Don towards Tsimliansk, and along the railway towards Salsk. The line of retreat of the German divisions in the Caucasus was in obvious peril.

Von Hoth's army west of Stalingrad was still cut off, and the ground it occupied was being steadily reduced by Russian attacks on all aides.



January 1943—



The Russian Front: January 1943—

THE ground won in the Red Army's counter-offensive of November and December was not large in extent compared with the whole area of German-occupied Soviet territory. But it was of very great strategic importance, and the Russian attacks were still developing as 1943 began.

The drive down the lower Don towards Rostov threatened the communications of all the German forces in the Caucasus; and very early in the New Year it became apparent that those forces were being withdrawn. The Russians retook Mozdok on 3rd January, and a week later had advanced beyond the line Piatigorsk-Georgievsk (see Map 313).

On 31st December Moscow issued a review of the six weeks' operations from 19th November to the end of the year, which stated that in the Don-Stalingrad-Kotelnikovo area the Germans had lost during that period 175,000 killed and 137,000 prisoners. Nearly 2,000 tanks had been captured by the Russians and 725 aeroplanes destroyed in the Stalingrad region alone.

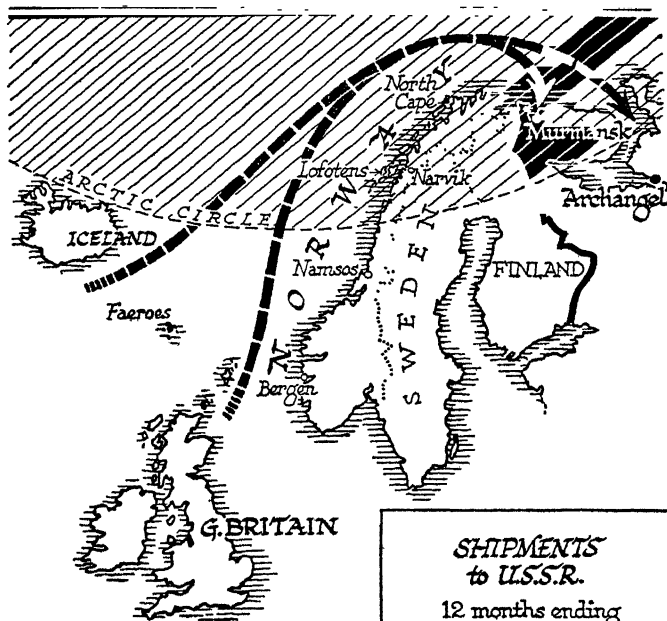
The Germans reported (31st December) that transport planes were supplying their advance forces—their first admission that Hoth's army (now under the command of von Paulus) was cut off from all normal means of supply. Out of some 440 German planes claimed by the Russians as destroyed during the last two weeks of

the year, 168 were stated to be transport planes. The situation of the Germans of the Volga army was clearly desperate. On the last day of January, von Paulus with 15 generals and the last remaining handful of German troops of the Stalingrad army surrendered to the Russians.

North-west of Moscow the Red Army was attacking in the salient to the west of Rzhev, and on the first day of 1943 the Russians claimed the capture of Velikie Luki.

On 18th January Moscow announced the relief of Leningrad. The Red Army had cut through the narrow German salient on the southern shore of Lake Ladoga. Leningrad had been besieged since September 1941, less than three months after Hitler's first assault on the Soviet Union.

The end of January saw the Russians advancing along the whole southern front, from Voronezh westward towards Kharkov, in the Donetsk area towards Voroshilovgrad, along the lower Don to the outskirts of Rostov, while in the Caucasus Maikop was retaken and passed. The German gains of the summer were almost wiped out.



**SHIPMENTS
to U.S.S.R.**

12 months ending
Sept. 30, 1942

3,052 aircraft
4,084 tanks
30,031 vehicles
42,000 tons aviation
spirit & petrol
66,000 tons fuel oil

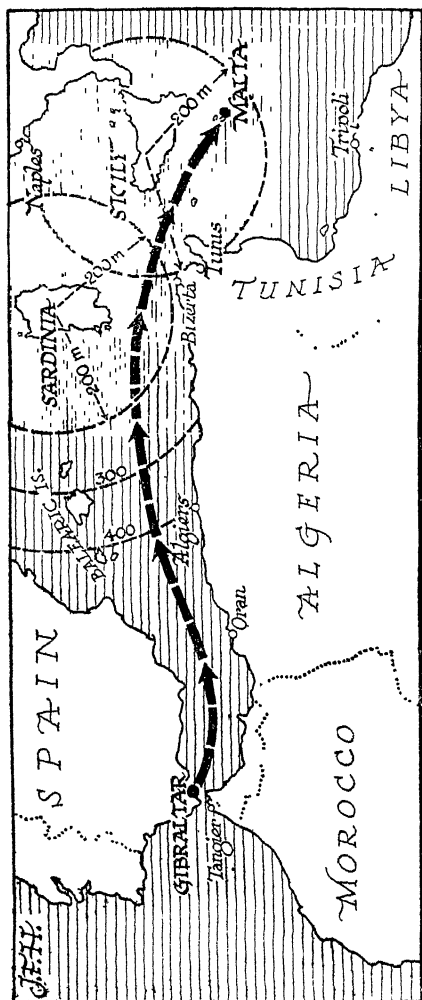
(831,000 deadweight tons
miscellaneous cargo)

Convoys to Russia—

THE dangerous voyage through northern seas to Murmansk and Archangel, with materials and munitions for the U.S.S.R., has been made again and again by Allied convoys. On one such voyage, reported by the Admiralty on 23rd and 25th September, attacks by U-boats and waves of aircraft went on for four days. "The great majority" of the ships reached Murmansk safely and no escort ship was lost. Between 50 and 60 German planes were destroyed during the attacks.

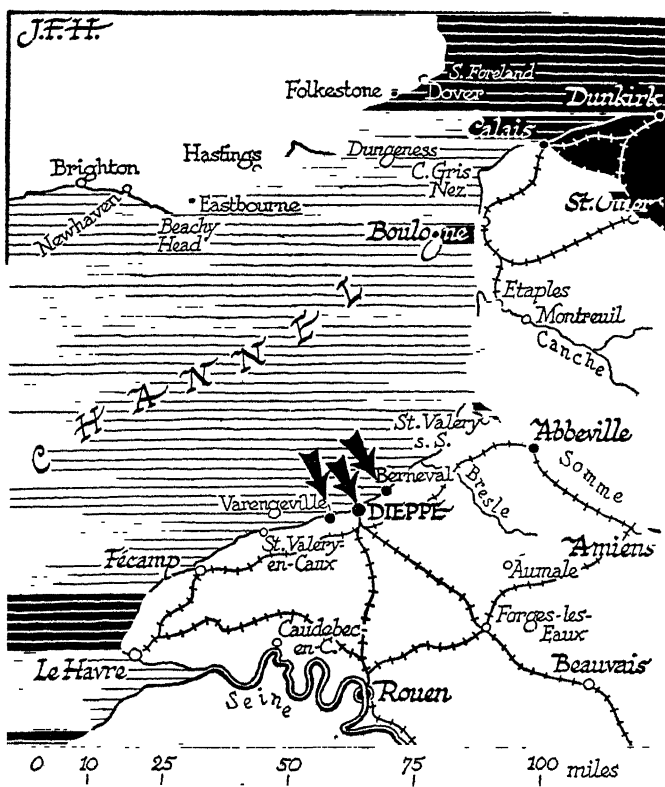
Another fierce battle, when British destroyers engaged and drove off a greatly superior enemy naval force, was fought north of the North Cape on the last day of 1942.

The First Lord of the Admiralty stated in November that, up to that date, British naval losses in convoying war materials to Russia had been 2 cruisers, 3 destroyers, 3 mine-sweepers, and 1 submarine. An official statement of the supplies shipped to Russia during the year ending September 30, 1942, is summarized in the map opposite. (The figures, of course, are of shipments, not of materials actually delivered. The "deadweight tons" figure refers to the shipping space occupied by miscellaneous cargo, not the weight of the cargo itself.)



Convoy to Malta—

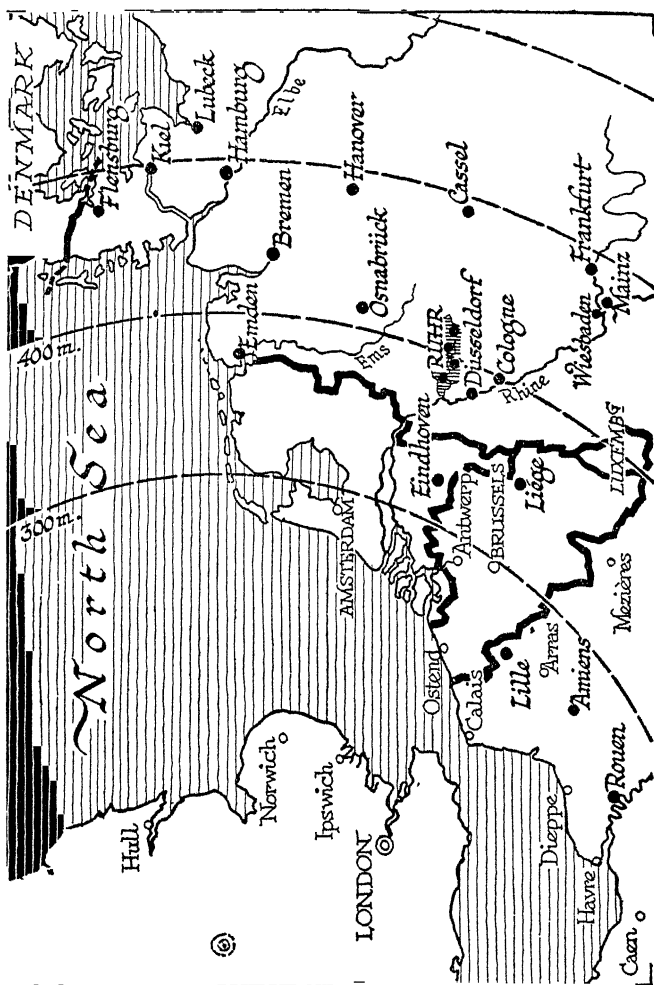
IN the second week of August a large British convoy carrying reinforcements and supplies (including fighter planes) to Malta was attacked by strong enemy formations of U-boats, torpedo-carrying and dive-bombing aeroplanes, and packs of E-boats. In addition, the Sicilian narrows had been extensively mined by the enemy. The aircraft-carrier *Eagle*, the cruiser *Manchester*, the anti-aircraft cruiser *Cairo*, and the destroyer *Foresight* were lost. But the greater part of the convoy reached its destination, and Malta received supplies sufficient, in Mr. Churchill's words, "to ensure the life and resistance of that heroic island-fortress for many months to come." The Admiralty *communiqué* declared "no praise can be too high for the gallantry and skill of the officers and men of the merchant ships in convoy during heavy attacks."



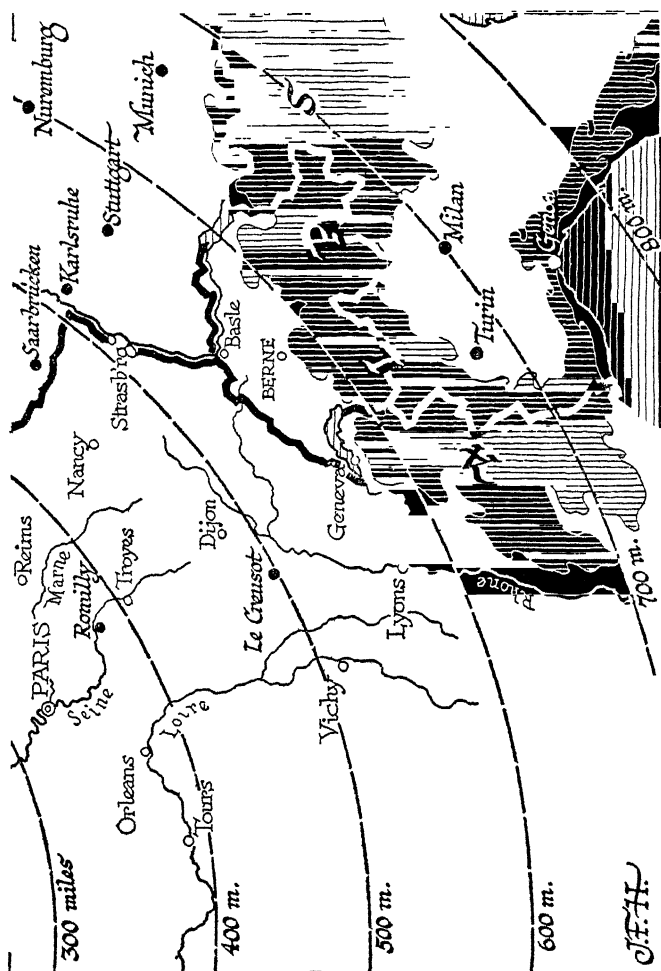
The Raid on Dieppe—

A STRONG Allied force, consisting mainly of Canadian troops, attacked the Dieppe area of the French coast on 19th August. Naval and air forces acted in complete co-operation. A frontal attack was made on the Dieppe beaches, and supporting attacks against Berneval to the east, and Varangeville to the west. Tanks were landed and considerable damage done to enemy coastal defences. There was a very heavy air battle in which the enemy lost over 90 planes certainly, with well over 100 "probables." The R.A.F. lost 91 planes, with 30 pilots saved.

In his September review of the war situation Mr. Churchill described the raid as "an indispensable preliminary to full-scale operations."



Germany and Italy—



The Air War on Germany and Italy—

SPEAKING in Parliament on 18th November the Secretary for Air stated that the R.A.F.'s raids on Lubeck and Rostock earlier in the year marked a turning-point in the weight and power of our air attacks on Germany. The new four-engined bombers had made possible a new technique—maximum violence and weight of attack concentrated in minimum time. It was announced at about the same date that the 1941 output of heavy bombers in this country had been trebled in 1942.

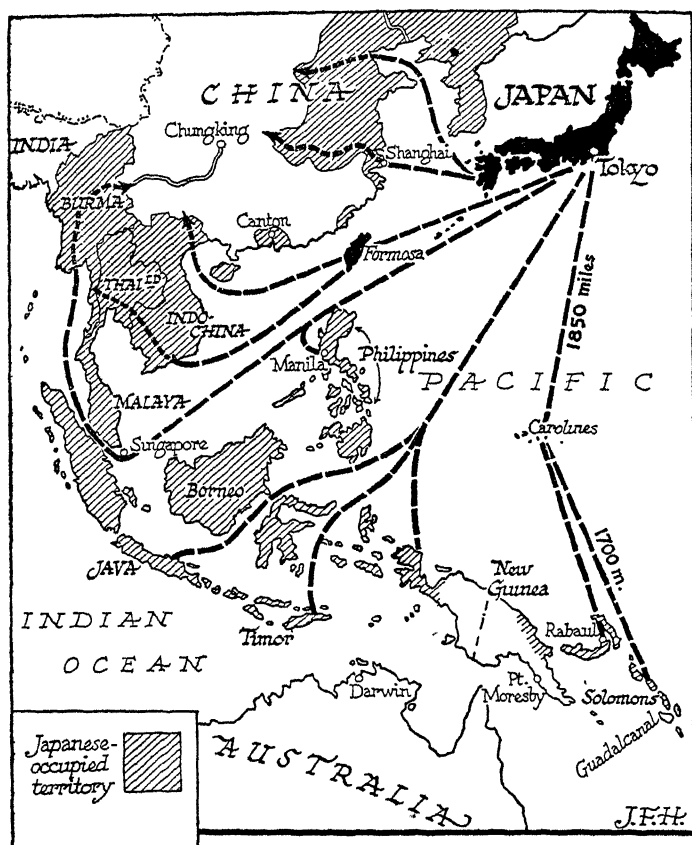
During the year twenty-eight production centres in Germany were the objectives of 100- (or more)- bomber raids, and these large-scale attacks numbered 88 in all. In the last half of the year these included very heavy raids on Danzig, Flensburg, Hamburg, Frankfurt, and Duisburg (Ruhr). In one raid on Hamburg 150,000 incendiaries were dropped. The raid on Duisburg on 19th December was the fifty-sixth on that town. Munich was bombed on 27th December.

In October there was a big attack on the French munition centre, Le Creusot ; and on 4th December a highly successful raid on a great electrical factory at Eindhoven (Holland). On 27th December U.S. bombers and R.A.F. fighters combined in an attack on a large German air-park at Romilly-sur-Seine.

Towards the end of October, in preparation for the North African offensive, the main weight of the R.A.F.'s

attacks was switched to Italy. Genoa, Turin, Savona, and Milan were each the objective of continued raids in which the newest and heaviest type of bombs were used.

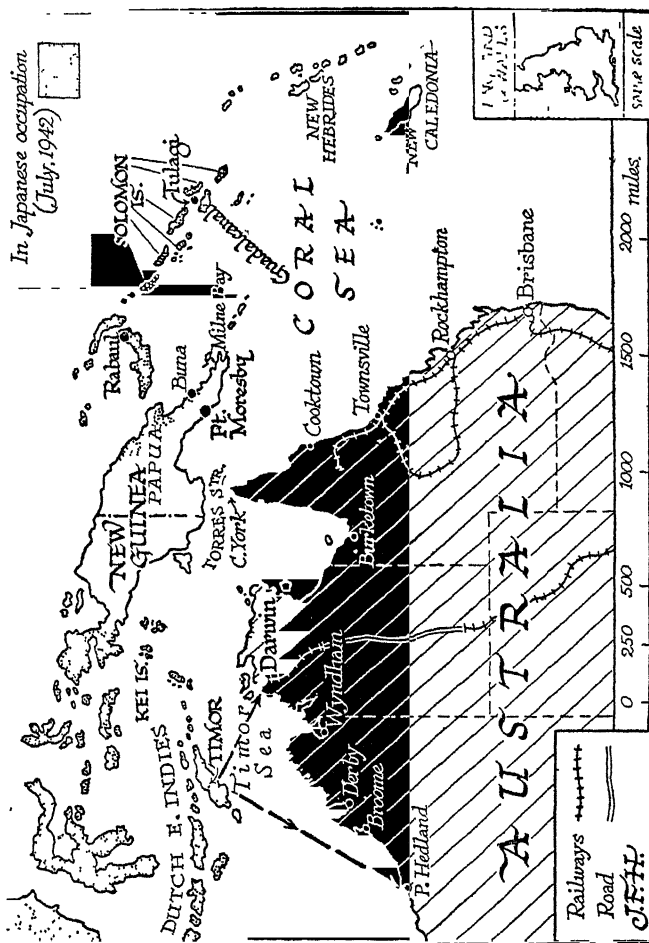
R.A.F. Coastal Command played an increasingly important part in the war against the U-boat, making more than 200 attacks on U-boats and over 4,000 on enemy merchant vessels. Altogether, aircraft of the Command flew more than 25 million miles during 1942.



Japan's Lines of Communication—

COMPARED with their achievements in the first three months of 1942 the progress made by the Japanese during the latter half of the year was small. India was not invaded ; nor was Australia. No advance of any importance was made in China. One obvious reason for this was the wide extent of their earlier conquests, and the length of the lines of communication they had now to operate.

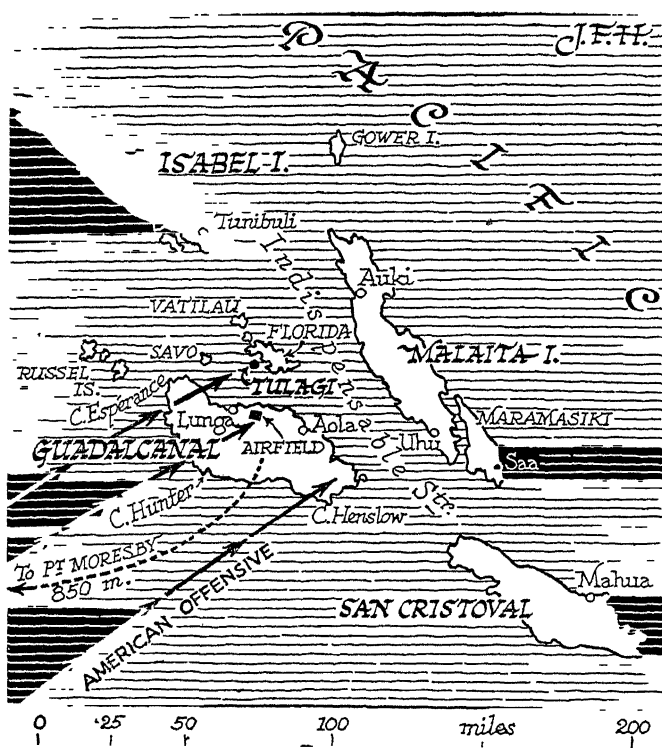
But though the land forces involved were relatively small, the sea and air warfare in the New Guinea-Solomon Islands region was on a considerable scale, and Japanese losses here in ships and planes were serious.



The War in the South-West Pacific—

THE battle of the Coral Sea, in May, had dealt a severe blow at Japanese naval strength. But their forces nevertheless proceeded to consolidate positions in the Solomon Islands, and to begin the rapid construction of air bases. The harbour of Tulagi, in which many of their ships had been destroyed in May, was still in their hands, and it and Rabaul, on the island of New Britain farther north, formed their main bases in this region.

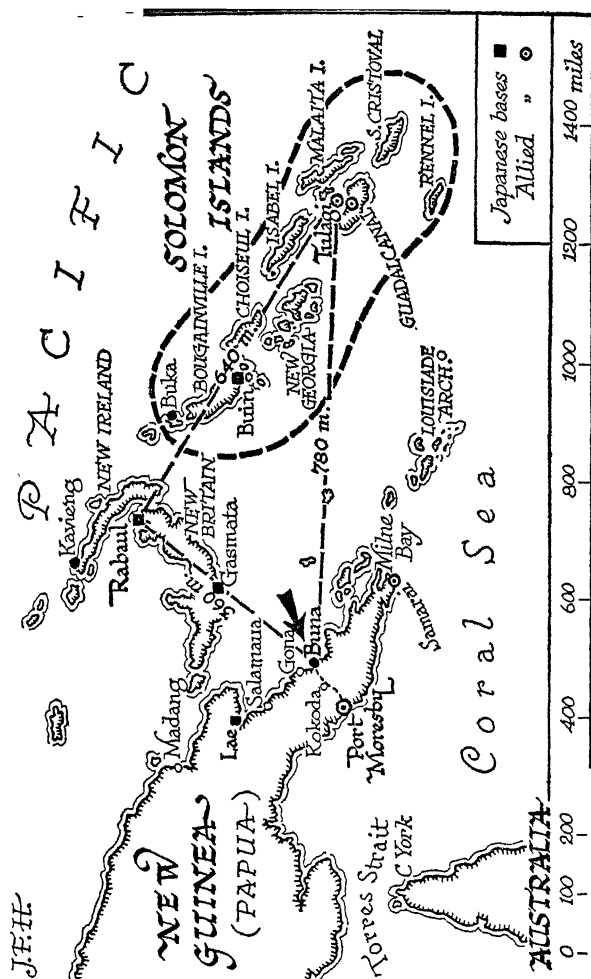
To the north-west of Australia they were already in possession of Timor, whence they made successive air raids on Darwin and other Australian coast towns as far south as Port Hedland. Towards the end of July they occupied the Kei Islands and other small groups of strategic value between Timor and New Guinea.



Allied Offensive in the Solomons—

EARLY in August American forces launched an offensive against the Japanese bases in the southern Solomon Islands, and after severe fighting captured the harbour of Tulagi and established themselves at various points on Guadalcanal. Fighting continued throughout the following months, the Japanese making repeated full-scale attempts to retake the lost positions, especially those on Guadalcanal. Various naval actions took place in which each side endeavoured to interfere with opposing transport fleets ; and the Japanese lost very heavily in planes in several bombing raids. But the Americans held on, consolidating themselves on the southern islands, and the enemy was compelled to make Buin, on Bougainville Island (see next map) his main base.

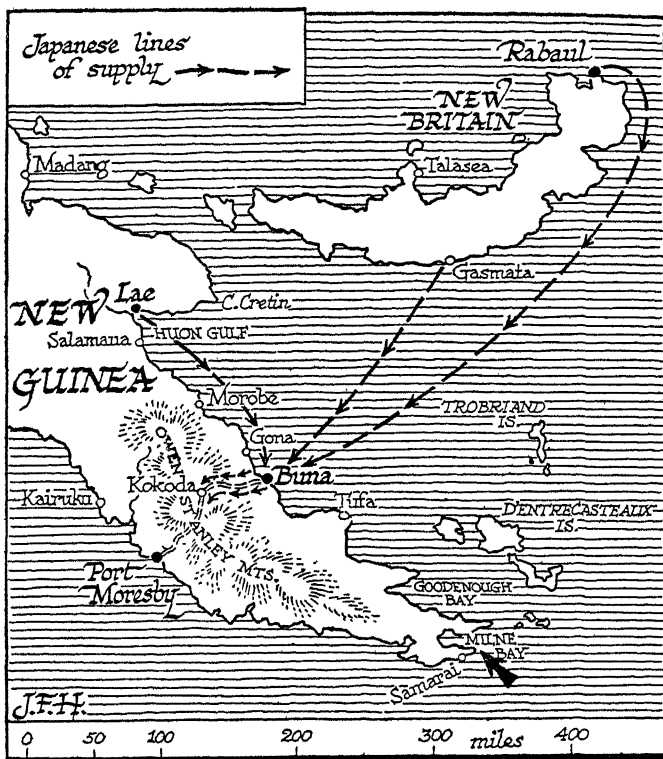
In the middle of November a naval battle, described later by Colonel Knox as a “ major but indecisive action,” was fought off Guadalcanal. The U.S. fleet sank one Japanese battleship and damaged a second, and sank 5 cruisers, 5 destroyers, and 12 transport and cargo vessels. In this action the American Admiral Callaghan was killed.



The Japanese attack New Guinea (I)—

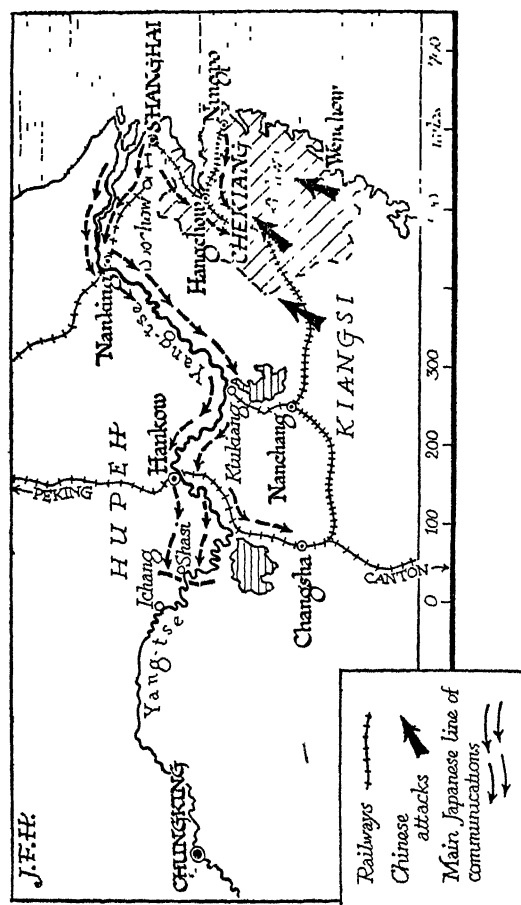
TOWARDS the end of July the Japanese landed forces at Gona and Buna on the eastern (Papuan) coast of New Guinea. They were already established farther north at Lae and Salamaua. The object of this new landing was to make a land attack, directly across the peninsula, on Port Moresby, the Australian outpost on the New Guinea side of Torres Strait, opposite Cape York. The enemy made a rapid advance to Kokoda.

At the extreme southern end of the island a Japanese attempt to land troops at Milne Bay was decisively repulsed.



The Japanese attack New Guinea (2)—

AFTER taking Kokoda, on the eastern side of the Owen Stanley range, the Japanese moved towards the gap in the mountains which was of vital importance for the defence of Port Moresby. Their advance guards reached a point only 32 miles distant from that town. Then the Australians took the offensive, steadily regaining all the mountain positions, and on 4th November they re-entered Kokoda. Before the end of that month the Japanese had been driven back to the coast. They were still holding on to beach positions at the end of the year, but their situation was desperate ; and convoys of reinforcements and supplies from Lae had been badly damaged in the Huon Gulf by Allied naval forces.

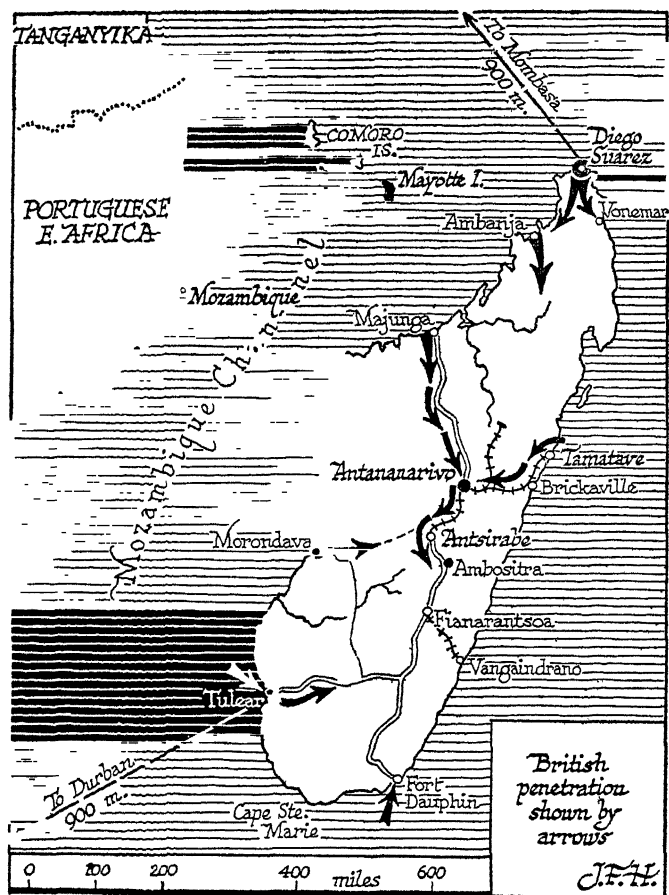


The War in China—

WITH the blocking of the Burma Road, China was cut off from all land- or sea-borne supplies from her Allies, except for what could be sent from the U.S.S.R. by the Sinkiang Road (*cf.* Map 284, Vol. VI).

During August and September the Chinese armies carried out vigorous offensives along the line of the Nanchang-Hangchow railway, and against Japanese air bases in Chekiang province. They captured the port of Wenchow, 200 miles south of Shanghai.

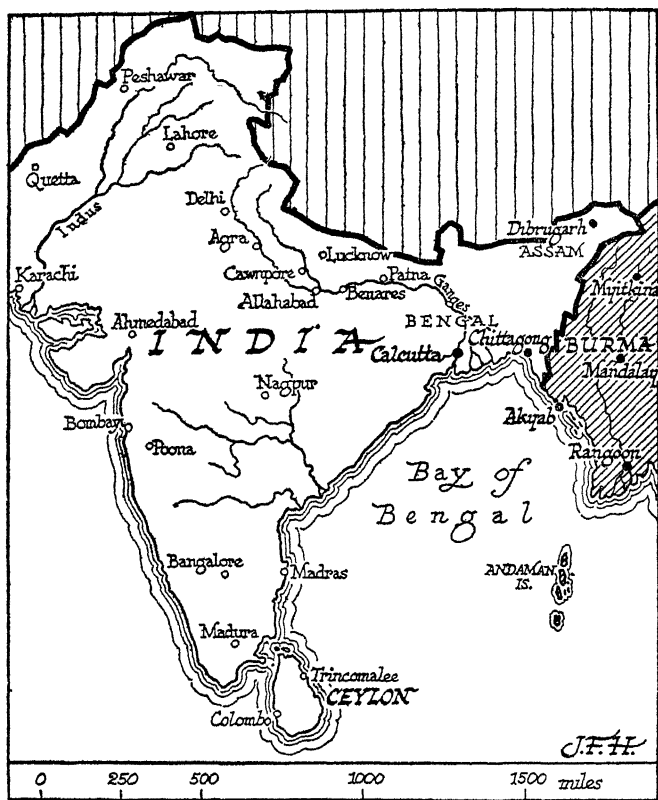
Japanese attacks in the central Yangtse area near Ichang and Shasi (the front nearest to Chunking) were all held, and the Chinese forces gained some ground.



The Conquest of Madagascar—

THE British occupation of the northern part of Madagascar earlier in the year left the Vichy authorities still in control of the greater part of the island. In September further British landings were made at the west coast ports of Ambanja, Majunga, and Morondava ; and an advance towards Antananarivo, the capital, was at once begun. The Vichy commander asked for an armistice, but rejected its terms ; and fighting went on. The east coast port of Tamatave and the southern ports, Tulcar and Fort Dauphin, were occupied.

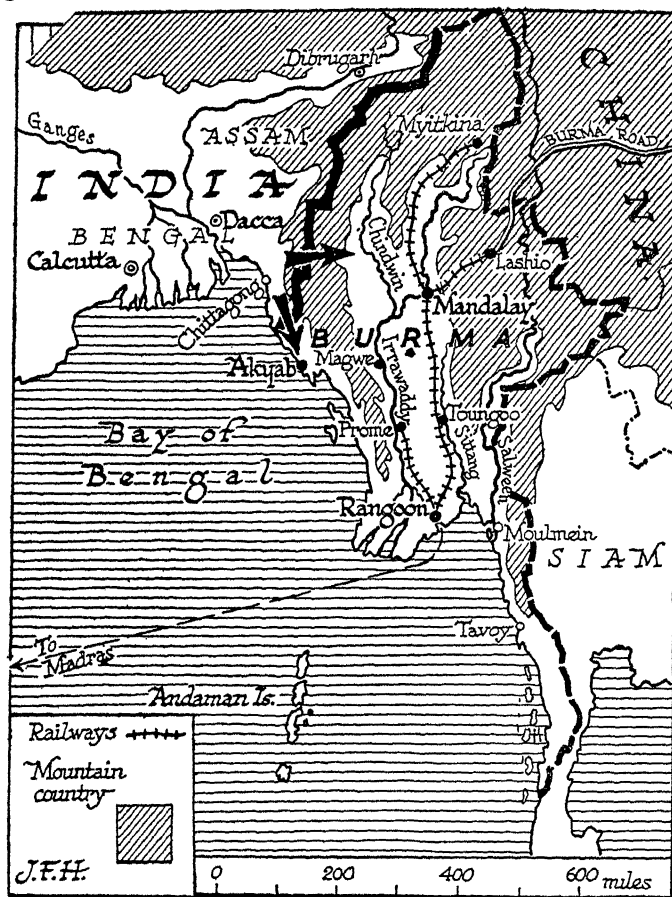
Before the end of September the British forces were in Antananarivo, and thence moved farther southward. A large Vichy force was defeated south of Ambositra during October, and on 5th November the governor surrendered the island.



India—

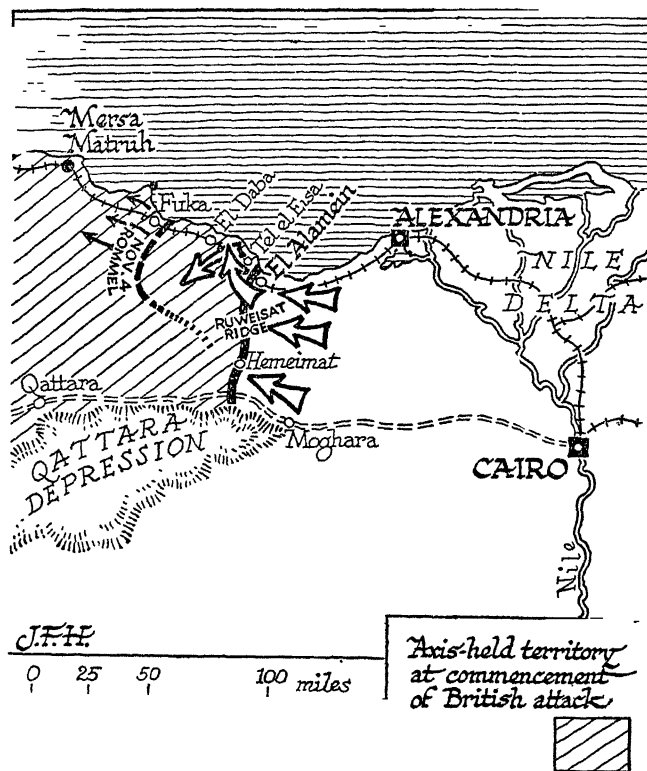
THE breakdown of the Cripps negotiations in April left the situation in India worse than it had previously been. The British Government insisted that the fundamental cause of the breakdown was the failure of Hindu and Muslim leaders to agree. Mr. Gandhi returned to virtual leadership of the Congress Party, which reiterated its demand for the cessation of British rule and the formation of an Indian Provisional Government. At a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee on 8th August a resolution was endorsed demanding Britain's withdrawal from India, and sanctioning a campaign of "non-violence." On the following day Mr. Gandhi, Pandit Nehru, Maulana Azad, and other Congress leaders were arrested. Very serious rioting followed in various towns and districts throughout the country.

Meantime the Japanese had not crossed the frontier from Burma. War activities were confined to extensive air raids, by the British against all the principal Burmese towns, and by the Japanese on Chittagong, Dibrugarh, and (20th December) Calcutta.



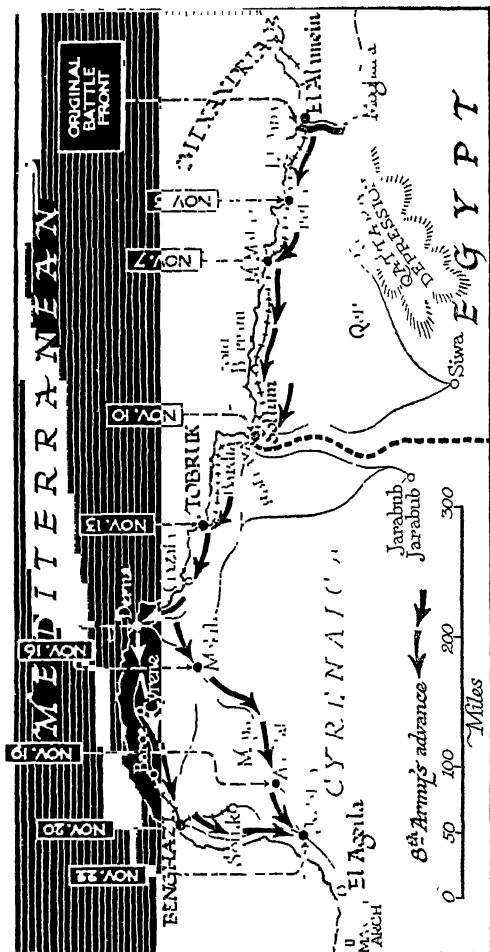
Advance into Burma—

BRITISH and Indian forces crossed the Burmese frontier late in December, advancing in the coastal region towards the port of Akyab, and farther north towards the valley of the Chindwin. Japanese resistance grew stronger as Akyab was approached.



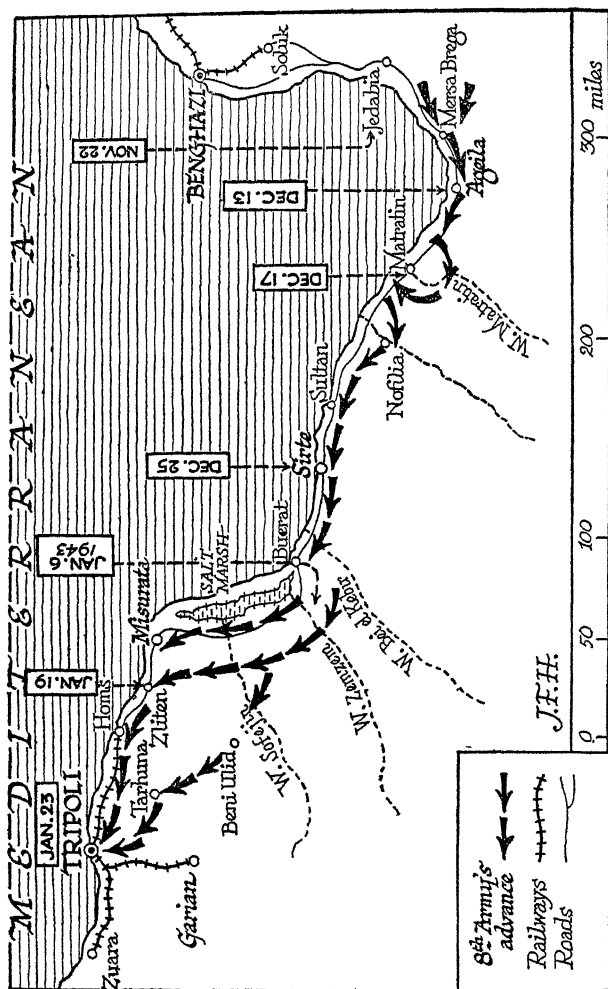
The Battle of El Alamein—

ROMMEL's rapid advance into Egypt in June-July had been held at the Alamein-Qattara line, some 60 miles west of Alexandria. Early in October preparations for a British offensive were begun by a series of intensive bombing raids on enemy landing-grounds and supply centres. During the last week of that month the Eighth Army attacked. Tanks and infantry moved against the northern sector, where the main fighting was concentrated for three or four days. By 3rd November Rommel's forces, decisively defeated, were retreating along the coast road towards Mersa Matruh, leaving the Italian divisions which had formed the southern wing of his army to surrender in tens of thousands owing to their lack of all transport.



The Pursuit of Rommel (1)—

THE second phase of the Battle of Egypt began on 5th November, with Rommel's Afrika Korps in full retreat. Within five days his forces had crossed the frontier at Halfaya, and were back once more in Cyrenaica. But the Eighth Army gave him no respite. They were in Tobruk by the 13th, and a week later had reoccupied Benghazi. Rommel was pushed back to El Ageila, whence his offensive had started eleven months earlier. There the pursuit was stayed for some days while Allied reinforcements were brought up.



The Pursuit of Rommel (2)—

DOUBT as to whether Rommel's forces would stand on the Ageila line was dissolved by news of their resumed retreat on 13th December. By this time the Allied forces were attacking in Tunisia (see later maps), and the German radio was speaking of "Rommel's westward advance" towards the new theatre of war. The Eighth Army kept up the pursuit. Some part of the enemy rearguard was cut off at the Wadi Matratin, but the bulk of what remained of the Afrika Korps succeeded in continuing its march towards Sirte, which was reached by the advance guards of the Eighth Army on Christmas Day. An enemy defence line on the Wadi Zemzem was attacked and overrun, and Misurata passed on 18th January. On the following day the British front ran from Homs southwest to Tarhuna. On the 23rd Tripoli was reached—an advance, from El Alamein, of nearly 1,400 miles in 80 days.

The pursuit went on towards the Tunisian frontier. . . .



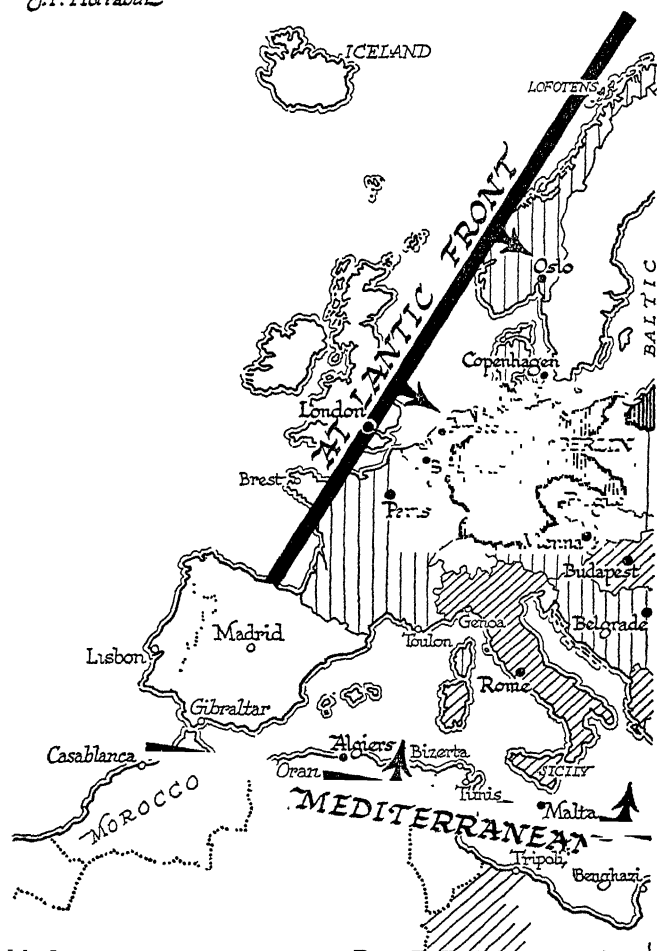
Liberia : African Bridgehead—

It was reported during October from Monrovia, capital of the Negro republic of Liberia, that U.S. troops had landed there, and this was quickly followed by accounts of special agreements between the government of the republic and Pan-American Airways. In December the U.S. Government announced that an agreement with the Liberian Government, giving the U.S. the right to construct, control, use, and defend airports in Liberia for the duration of the war, had been signed some months previously.

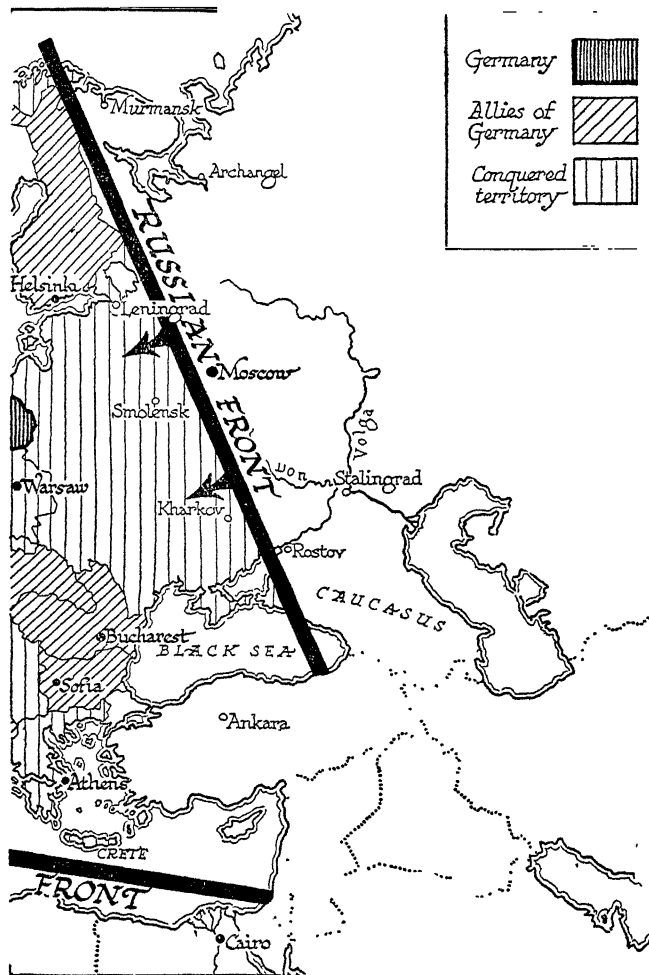
The strategic importance of Liberia as a base for air action against U-boats operating in the middle Atlantic, between the African and South American coasts, is sufficiently clear from the map. (*Cf.* also Map 344, "Brazil.")

332 Third Front: The Allies

J.F. Horrabin



land in North Africa—



Third Front: The Allies land in North Africa—

ON Sunday morning, 8th November, British and American troops landed at various points on the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts of French North Africa. At the same time as the landings took place a joint American-British declaration was broadcast to the people of France, stating that "the first step to the liberation of France" was being taken; and President Roosevelt made a direct appeal to Marshal Pétain to accept Allied assistance and to resume the fight against the Axis. The appeal was rejected, and the Marshal gave orders for resistance. Some French naval forces and coast batteries obeyed, but within three days all resistance ceased, and Admiral Darlan, Pétain's High Commissioner in North Africa, ordered a general capitulation.

The principal landings were in the neighbourhood of Casablanca (on the Atlantic coast of Morocco) and Oran and Algiers (on the Mediterranean). More than 500 ships took part in the convoy, protected by over 350 warships. It was, said the Minister of Production, speaking in Parliament a few days later, "by far the largest amphibious operation in history."

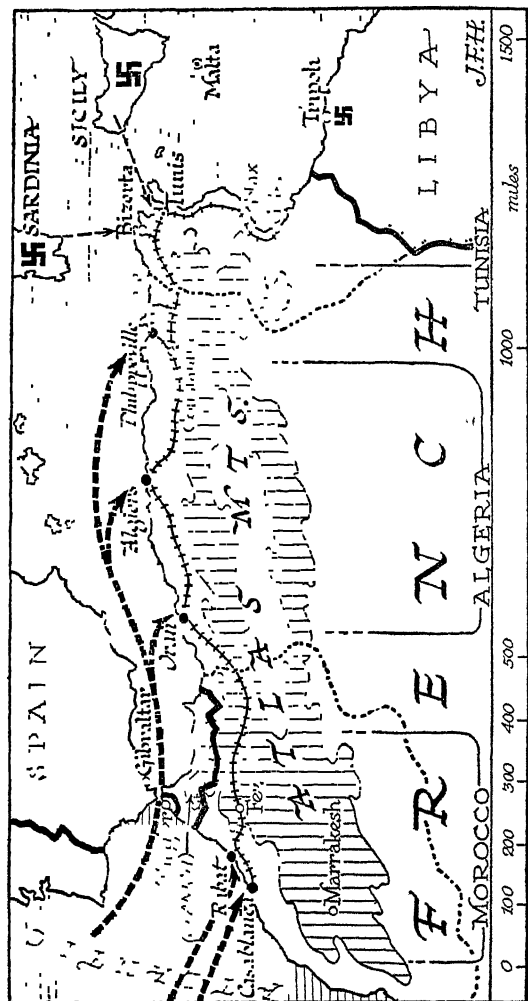
The American General Eisenhower was in command of all land forces. For some days the political situation was obscure. General Giraud, who had escaped from a German prison camp earlier in the year, was in Algiers, and he called on the French to take up arms again against

the Axis. Admiral Darlan was reported to be a prisoner in Allied hands ; but he shortly emerged as head of a French North African Government, and appointed General Giraud commander of all French military forces. When, following the landings, Hitler ordered the occupation of all France, Darlan belatedly broadcast an appeal to the French fleet at Toulon to sail to North Africa.

Darlan was assassinated in Algiers on 24th December. The Council of Governors appointed General Giraud High Commissioner in his place. General de Gaulle, leader of Fighting France, welcomed Giraud as an ally against the Axis, but issued a statement declaring that " internal confusion " was increasing in French North Africa, and reiterating the need for the establishment of a unified central authority, based on democratic republican principles, for all the anti-Axis French forces.

In the last week of December Mr. Harold Macmillan was appointed British Resident Minister in North-West Africa.

On 14th January Mr. Churchill and President Roosevelt, with their Chiefs of Staff of all arms, met in conference at Casablanca ; and Generals Giraud and de Gaulle were also present. President Roosevelt announced to the press his conviction that peace could only be assured by the unconditional surrender of the Axis Powers, and said that the United Nations were agreed upon this.



French North Africa : Communications—

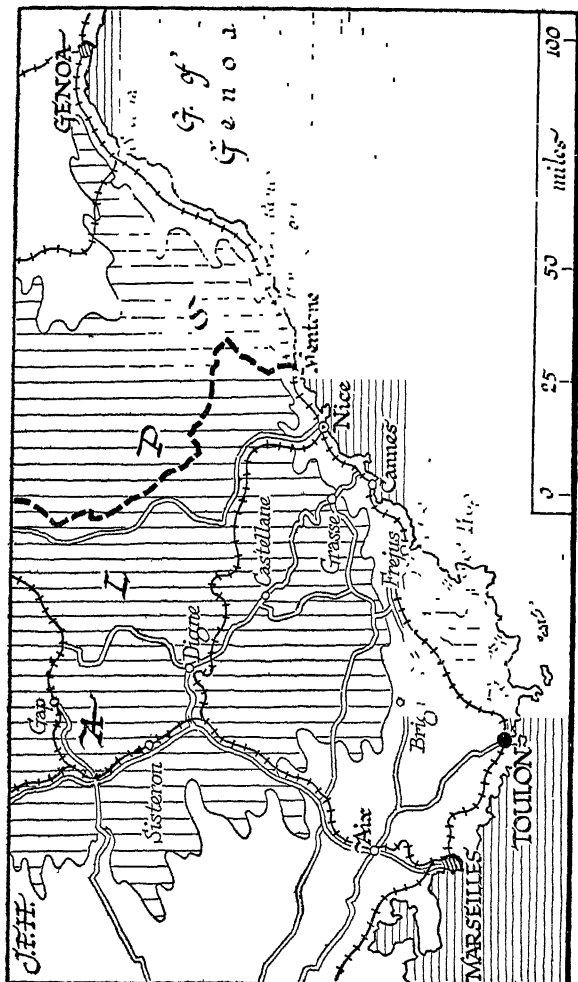
FRENCH North Africa, strategically, is a strip of coastline nearly 2,000 miles long, extending from the south-western corner of Morocco, on the Atlantic, to the borders of Tripolitania, in the eastern Mediterranean, broken only by the 200 miles of Spanish Morocco. Roughly parallel with the coast, 100 miles or so inland, is the line of the Atlas Mountains ; and the main populated areas—and most of the fertile land—lie in this long strip of territory between the mountains and the sea.

There is direct rail communication from Casablanca and Rabat, the chief ports on the Atlantic coast, to Oran and Algiers, and thence to Bizerta and Tunis. The aim of American-British strategy, having secured bases in all the western part of this territory, was to advance by land on Tunis and Bizerta, the two ports commanding the southern shore of the “ narrows ” in the centre of the Mediterranean.

Hitler occupies All France—

HITLER's reply to the Allied move in North Africa took the not unexpected form of the occupation of the whole of France down to the Mediterranean—with the exception of Toulon, which was declared to be a "special area"—doubtless because of German doubts as to the action the French naval chiefs would take in the new situation. Marshal Pétain at first "solemnly protested" against this breach of the terms of the armistice. But when, two or three days after the occupation, Laval returned to Vichy after a meeting with Hitler at Munich, no further protestations were made.

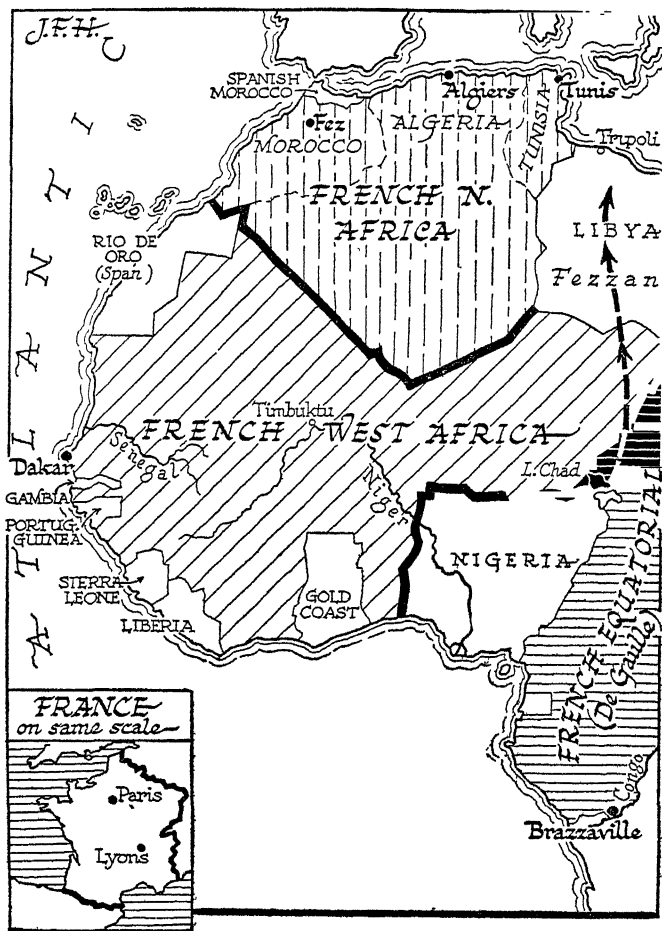
Italian troops meantime occupied Corsica.



Toulon—

AT 4 a.m. on 27th November German troops entered Toulon. Before they could seize the ships of the French fleet lying in the harbour, Admiral de Laborde ordered the vessels to be scuttled. They included the 26,000-ton battleships *Dunkerque* and *Strasbourg*, the old battleship *Provence*, four 10,000-ton cruisers, three smaller cruisers, an aircraft-carrier, 25 or more destroyers and 20 submarines. Three submarines escaped from the harbour, two of them reaching North Africa, while one was interned at Barcelona.

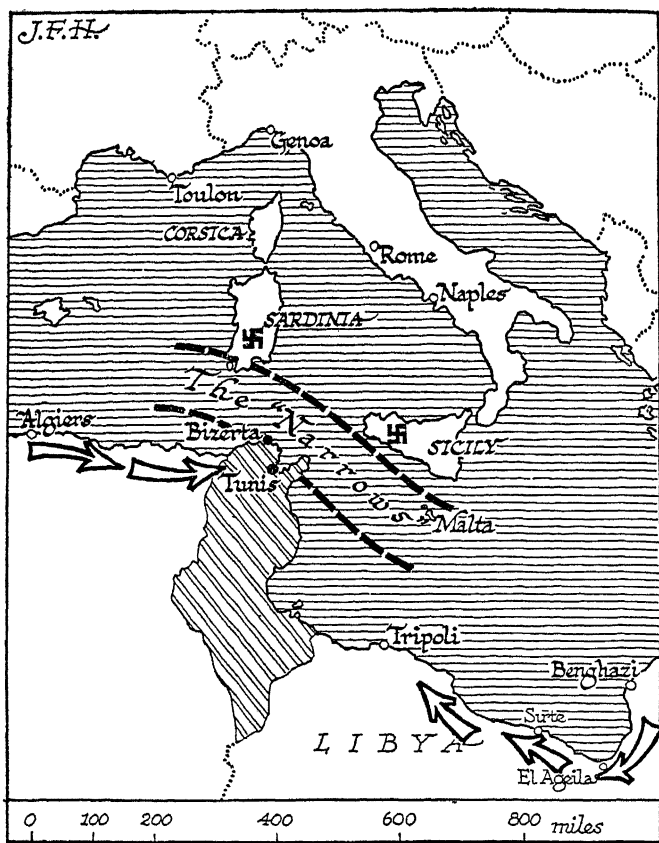
It was later estimated, on information from aerial reconnaissance and other sources, that about a quarter of the fleet fell into German hands ; and that it would be possible for them to repair the three battleships.



French West Africa—

GENERAL BOISSON, High Commissioner for French West Africa, declared the allegiance of his territories to Darlan and the Council at Algiers on 23rd November. The most valuable single gain in this accession to Allied strength was the naval and air base of Dakar which, with the ports on the Moroccan coastline, would be of vital importance in the campaign against U-boats in the Atlantic. The total population of French West Africa is nearly 15 millions, including 17,000 French ; and the French armed forces in the territory are estimated at 60,000.

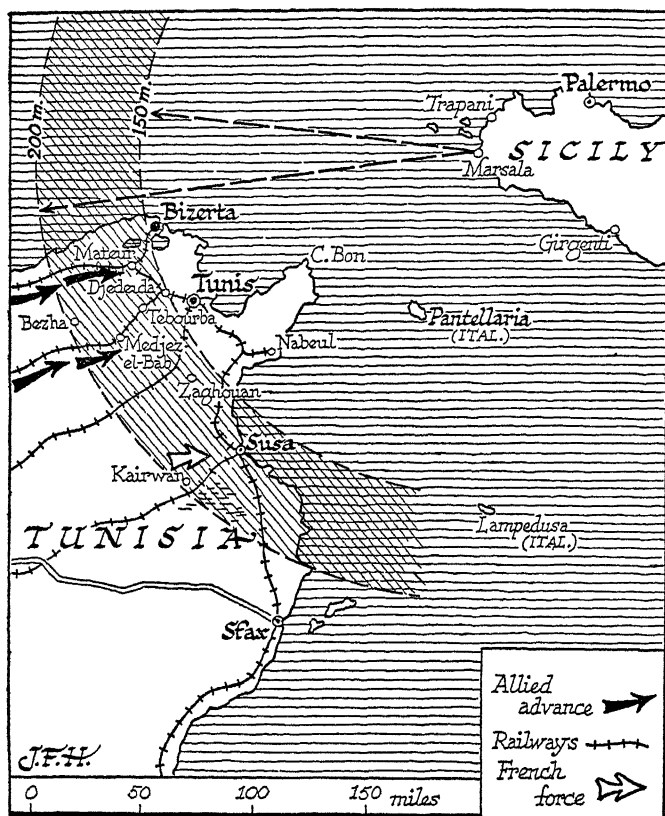
French Equatorial Africa had declared for General de Gaulle in August 1940 (see Map 121, Vol. III). Early in January 1943 news came through of General Leclerc's Fighting French force from Lake Chad, which had advanced hundreds of miles northward into the Fezzan area of southern Libya, and shortly afterwards made contact with the British Eighth Army moving towards Tripoli.



The Importance of Tunisia—

THE eastward advance of the Anglo-American forces from Algiers and the Eighth Army's pursuit of Rommel towards Tripoli meant that the two theatres of war in North Africa had now become one, with the occupation of Tunisia as the joint objective. Allied control of this territory was essential if the African coast was to become, as Mr. Churchill had indicated that it would, "a spring-board" for further action against southern Europe ; and if the sea-road through the Mediterranean to Suez was to be reopened for Allied shipping.

The Allied advance on Tunisia from the west was handicapped by long and not too adequate lines of communication. The Axis had the advantage of their strong air bases in Sardinia and Sicily, both commanding the area of the two vitally important ports, Bizerta and Tunis.

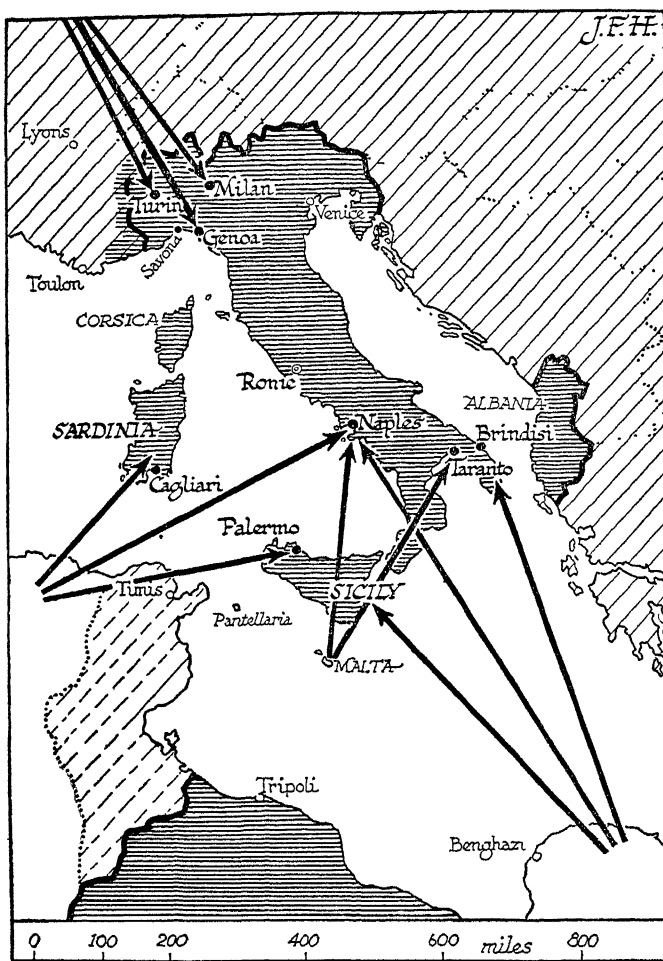


The Tunisian Campaign—

THE race between the Anglo-American and the Axis forces to gain possession of Bizerta and Tunis seemed to be going at first in favour of the Allies. Their advance troops reached Djedeida, 15 miles west of Tunis, and Mateur, 20 miles south of Bizerta. But German troops in increasing numbers were being landed by aircraft, and the Luftwaffe was strengthened by large numbers of planes diverted from European fronts. The Allied forces were pushed back some 25 miles, to the region of Medjez-el-Bab.

Meantime the Germans had won control of the whole Tunisian coastline, including the ports of Susa and Sfax ; and they were engaged by a French force based on Kairwan.

The Allied air force meantime carried out intensive raids on Bizerta, Tunis, Sfax, and Susa.



Bombing Italy—

THE Allied occupation of great areas of the African coast made possible a more systematic bombing of the ports, air bases, and communications of southern Italy, especially of Naples docks and harbour. Flying from home bases the R.A.F. carried out a series of heavy raids during the last three months of the year on Genoa, Turin, Milan, and Savona. These began on 22nd October with the heaviest air attack yet made on Italy, when Genoa's dock and factory area was the principal objective. Between that date and 15th November Genoa was bombed six times. Still heavier attacks were made on Turin, particularly on the Fiat works, on 18th and 20th November.

The Eighth Army's subsequent seizure of the whole Tripolitanian coast gave the R.A.F. still more bases, nearer to Sicily and southern Italy.

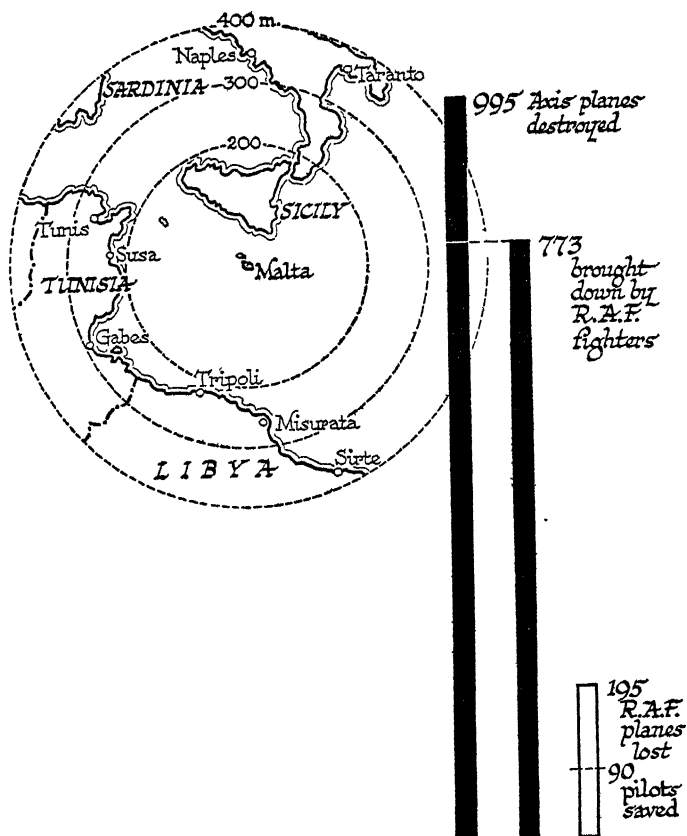


Axis Rule in the Balkans—

THE safeguarding of their communications through the Balkan peninsula became still more urgent for the Nazis after the Allied landings on the African Mediterranean coast ; and the Axis rule of terror in Yugoslavia and Greece was accordingly intensified. But the activities of patriot bands in both countries—the derailing of trains and the blowing up of bridges—still went on. New York radio broadcast a message from General Mihailovitch, leader of the “ Chetniks,” in November, stating that nearly a million Yugoslavs had been killed in the struggle against the Axis, and that whole districts of Serbia and Slovenia were in ruins. He declared that the Axis had been forced to keep thirty divisions in Yugoslavia. As well as the Chetniks under Mihailovitch, Communist “ Partisans ” in Croatia and guerilla forces in Slovenia are carrying on the fight against the German-Italian troops.

From both Yugoslavia and Greece supplies of food were confiscated and sent to Germany. The Greek Minister of Information stated in London in December that not less than 100,000 out of a population of 1 million in Athens had died of hunger during the fifteen months of Axis occupation.

German penetration of Bulgaria was increased, and the Todt organization was reported to be hard at work on the construction of several “ tourist roads.” A state of emergency was declared in Sofia early in December, and hundreds of “ Communists ” and pro-Russian sympathizers were arrested.

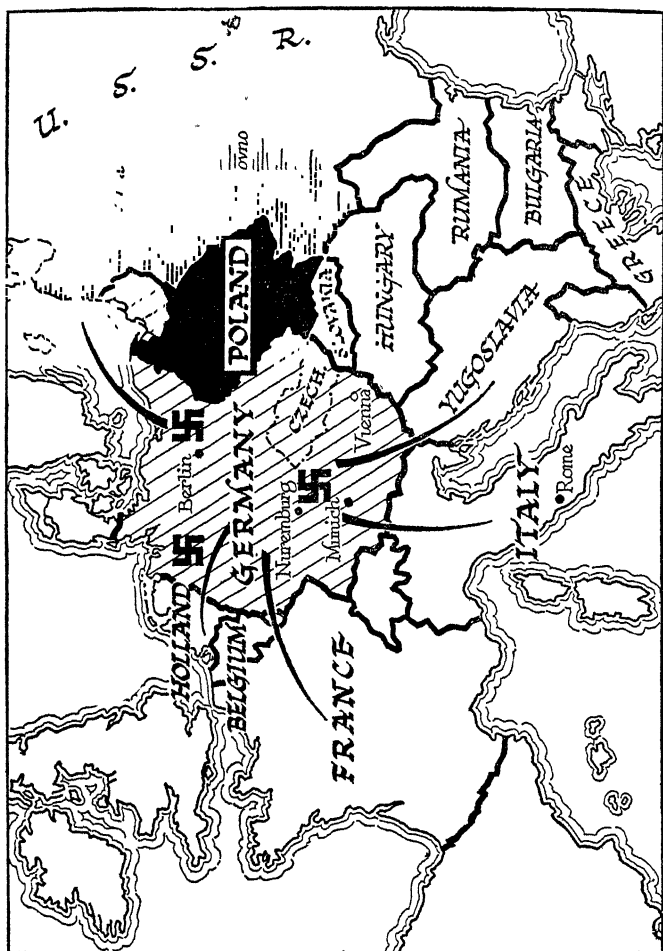


Malta

Hits Back—

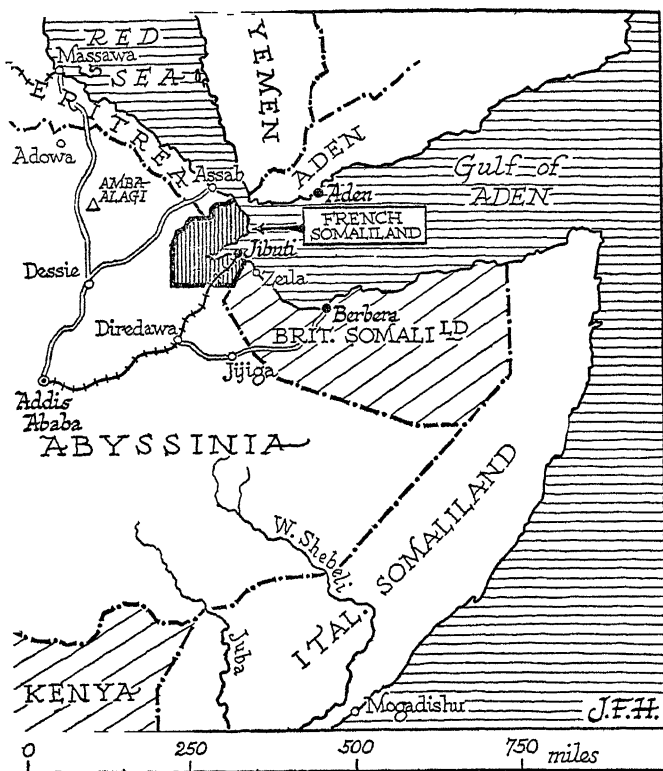
ENEMY raids on Malta continued, in varying degrees of intensity, throughout the year. The air defences of the island hit back with unremitting vigour. The week ending 18th October was a record. During that short period Spitfire pilots destroyed no fewer than 112 German and Italian planes, with 220 airmen lost to the enemy.

Malta's total figures for the whole year's air fighting are given in the map opposite.



The Martyrdom of the Jews—

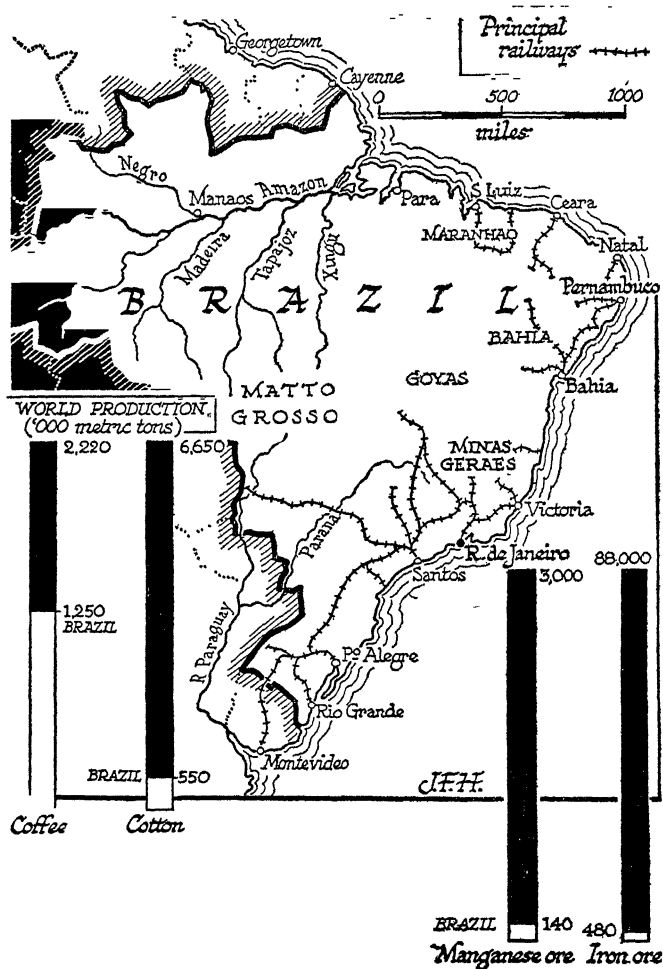
TWICE, in speeches during 1942, Hitler declared that all the Jews of Europe must be "exterminated." He had previously decreed a slave colony for Jews somewhere in the interior of Poland, to which mass deportations from German cities and from the occupied countries had taken place. The inhabitants of this continental ghetto were now to be massacred. According to evidence published by the Polish Government, about a million Jews had perished in Poland by October. In December the State Department at Washington published a list of Jewish victims deported or "perished" since 1939 in Hitler's Europe, including Germany, 160,000; Austria, 60,000; the Czech provinces, 65,000; Holland, 120,000; Yugoslavia, 96,000; France, 35,000; Rumania, 630,000; Slovakia, 70,000; Latvia, 25,000. "It is believed that 2,000,000 European Jews have perished and that 5,000,000 are in danger of extermination."



French Somaliland declares for de Gaulle—

FRENCH Somaliland, the last remaining Vichy territory in Africa, joined the United Nations as part of Fighting France on 27th December, and the French National Committee appointed as Governor M. Bayardelle, formerly of French Equatorial Africa.

The colony is chiefly important because of its port, Jibuti, the sea terminus of the Addis-Ababa railway. Jibuti is only 150 miles from Aden, the two places commanding the southern entrance to the Red Sea.

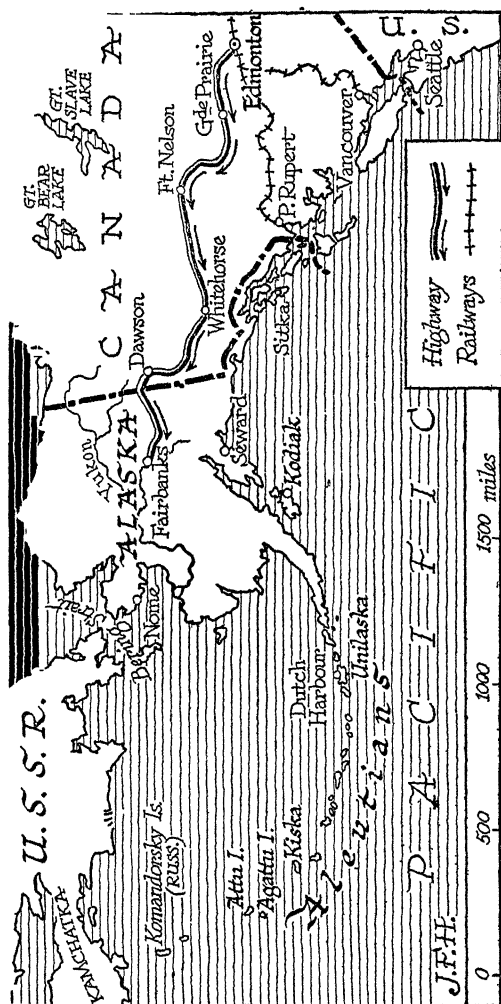


Brazil enters the War—

BRAZIL, the fourth largest single country in the world, declared war on the Axis Powers on 22nd August. Some months previously (28th January) she had broken off diplomatic relations, and German attacks on Brazilian shipping and the discovery of Fifth Column activities by Axis agents precipitated the final break.

Brazil's strategic position is important, since the "Atlantic bulge" formed by her north-eastern territories is the nearest part of the American continent to the Old World. The distance from Natal, the Pan-American air base, to Dakar in West Africa is 1,715 nautical miles.

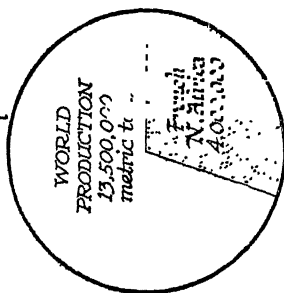
Plans to speed up Brazilian production on important raw materials, with U.S. capital and direction, were immediately put in hand. Brazil's largest iron-ore deposits are in Minas Geraes, and bauxite and manganese are also worked in that province. U.S. Lease-Lend assistance is being given for the development of rubber cultivation farther north. In the case of all these raw materials an urgent need is the construction of improved railway and transport facilities. The only transport communication between northern and southern Brazil is by sea.



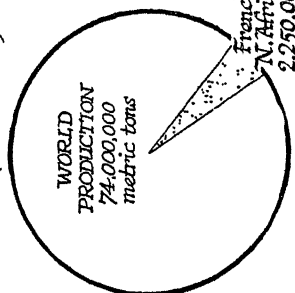
The Alaska Highway—

THE U.S. Secretary for War announced on 29th October that the Alaska Highway was open, and that the transport of war material and supplies to bases in Alaska had already begun. The road, 1,670 miles long, runs from near Edmonton (Alberta) to Fairbanks, in Alaska. It was constructed in just over six months, at an average rate of eight miles per day, mainly from materials obtained on the spot. Fairbanks, which stands on a tributary of the Yukon, is connected by river with the Bering Strait, the opposite coast of which is Russian Far Eastern territory.

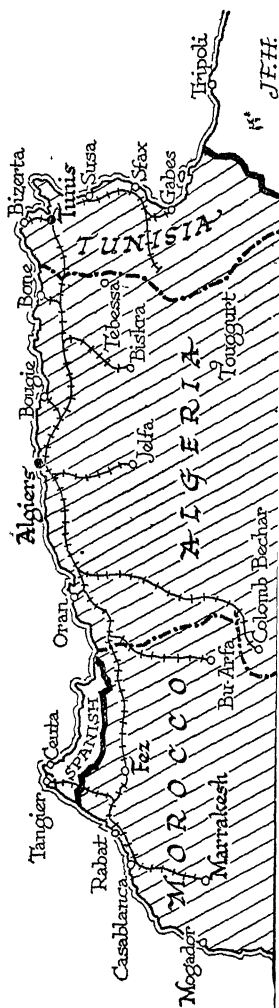
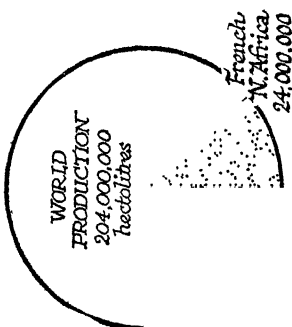
Natural Phosphates



Iron Ore (metal content)



Wine



Economic Resources of French North Africa (I)—

FRENCH North Africa consists of the three territories of Algeria, Tunis, and Morocco. The northern (coastal) provinces of Algeria were Departments of France, while its southern desert areas were under Colonial administration. Tunis and Morocco were both Protectorates. The total population is about 15 million, of whom less than a million and a half are Europeans.

The territories are economically important as producers of primary products, including cereals, wine, phosphates, iron-ore, and livestock. Great Britain took most of the iron-ore, but the bulk of all other exports, especially foodstuffs, went to France. Industrial development was retarded by the lack of coal and oil, and efforts have been made since the fall of France to develop a coalfield near Colomb Bechar (see map). A certain number of French factories have been removed to North Africa during the past two years.

There was very considerable interruption of the normal trade with France during the months immediately following Pétain's surrender; but by the spring of 1941 traffic was once more at normal level, and the total figures of food exports to France for that year (see next diagram) were considerably greater than those for 1938.

On 20th December it was announced that an Economic Mission had left London for North Africa to discuss with American experts the utilization of all the economic resources of the territories for the benefit of the Allied war effort.

ALGERIAN Food Exports to FRANCE
(metric tons)

1938  1941 

Grain

178,000

106

96,800

Vegetables
& other fruit

113,600

Citrus fruit

72,000

59,000

Wine

16,400,000 hectolitres

Dates

11,300

Figs

20,700

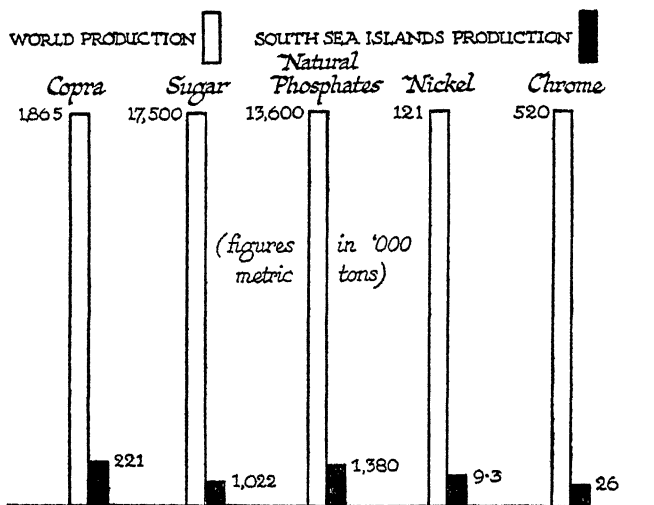
5,500

5,850,000

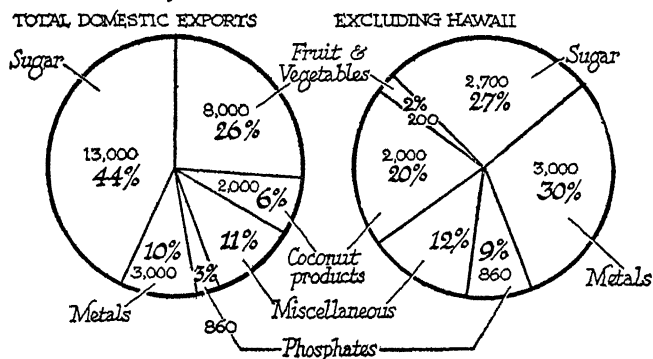
Economic Resources of French North Africa (2)—

As this diagram shows, the food exports from Algeria to France rose well above peace-time level in 1941. It is not, therefore, surprising that, a few days after the Anglo-American landings, French newspapers were expressing alarm at the losses in food supplies which France would thenceforth suffer. Algerian grain, for instance, represented in 1941 one month's supply for the whole of Unoccupied France.

The drop in the export of wine in 1941 (see last column in diagram) is explained by the fact that 6 million hectolitres of that year's crop were distilled into fuel alcohol. (One hectolitre=22 gallons.)



South Sea Is. Exports in £'000



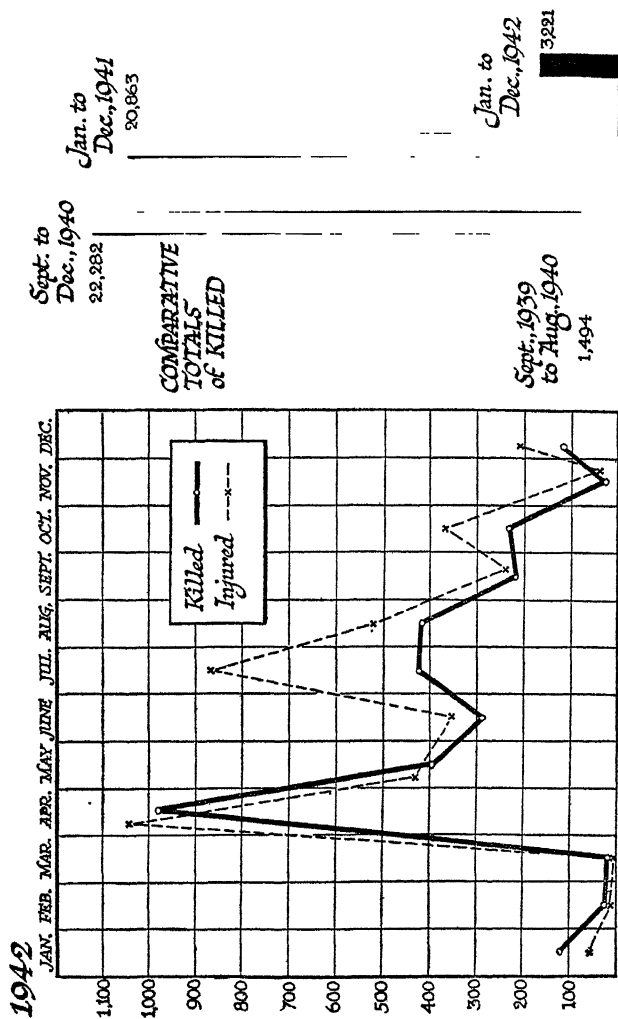
South Sea Island Resources—

THESE diagrams give some picture of the economic importance of the South Sea Islands. The islands vary very considerably in their inhabitants, their stage of development, and their economic life.

The commodities shown in the diagram are most of them only produced in one or two of the islands. Sugar is now only commercially produced in Fiji, Hawaii, and the Japanese mandate ; natural phosphates in Nauru, the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, the French Settlements, and the Japanese mandate ; and nickel and chrome in New Caledonia. The commodity on which most of the islands are dependent for their prosperity is copra (a product of the coconut), which is produced in nearly all of them.

The lower diagrams show the relative importance of these commodities in the islands' export trade. The first one is somewhat distorted by the large specialized trade of Hawaii, where a large export trade in pineapples has been built up in recent years, and the second is given in order to show the position without Hawaii. Apart from copra and the few other commodities mentioned, the islands' economy is still mostly on a subsistence basis.

The pre-war political control of the islands was as varied as the islands themselves. The powers concerned were Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, France, Japan, Holland, and the United States.



Civilian Casualties in Air Raids, 1942—

THIS diagram repeats the figures (revised) for the first half of 1942 already given in Diagram 300 (Vol. VI), and completes the table for the whole of the year. During these later months enemy air raids were mainly confined to attacks on coastal towns.

Some comparative figures of previous totals of civilians killed are also given.